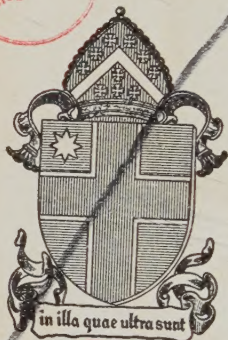


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THE A B C OF
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TO
MY WIFE

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THE A B C OF CHRISTIAN LIVING

I

INTRODUCTORY: THE RIGHT PERSPECTIVE

No one is likely to be interested in the practice of the Christian life who does not sometimes ask questions about the meaning and purpose of life in general. There are some, no doubt, who are content to exclaim with the poet, "How good is man's life, the mere living!" and to leave it at that without further thought or reflection. This little volume is not written for them: the author has in mind, on the contrary, those who are troubled at times with obstinate and irrepressible questionings as to the meaning and purpose of man's existence in the world. These questionings are not, perhaps, continuous or absorbing to most of us—though they are to some: nevertheless, however unreflecting and unimaginative a man may be, there come moments in which the calm surface of his mind is disturbed by the sudden intrusion, apparently from nowhere in particular, of thoughts and ideas which bring him face to face with tremendous queries which have always exercised the minds of thoughtful men.

The kinds of occasion which excite such disturbing reflections vary with different people: but few of us are proof against them.

*Just when we are safest, there's a sunset touch,
A fancy from a flower-bell, some one's death,
A chorus-ending from Euripides—
And that's enough for fifty hopes and fears
As old and new at once as Nature's self,
To rap and knock and enter in our soul.*

The distinguishing features of the *Christian* answer to such questions—What is the “end” of human life? Why are we here? What is our destiny?—may be most easily appreciated when contrasted with the kind of answer which the “average man” would probably give to them. The latter might, perhaps, say something like this: “I don’t profess to know much about religion. But I believe in a God, who overrules our lives here and hereafter. If I don’t quite believe that Jesus was God, I am sure that He was the nearest approach to divinity that this world has ever seen or is likely to see, and that the proper task of men and women is so to fashion their lives that they may fulfil in as high a degree as possible the precepts which Jesus set forth in the Sermon on the Mount. And what that Sermon amounts to, in modern and common language, seems to me to be this: Do as you would be done by. Love your neighbour as yourself. Do a good turn whenever the opportunity occurs. Try and leave the world a little better than you found it.”

Now the Sermon on the Mount involves a good deal more than this. But it certainly involves so much, and it is something—indeed, it is a great deal—that large numbers of men and women should pay homage in this way to the moral element in Christianity. But when a man talks like that, there is something I want to say in reply.

I want to ask, Can you do it? Is it possible? Isn’t it an ideal so utterly beyond your own capacities, even beyond your deepest desires, as to be almost worthless? *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father*

in heaven is perfect. What is the use of such a maxim as that to men like you and me? When we talk about "following the moral teaching of Christ," do we realise what we are saying? And, if we do realise it—if we realise, for instance, that He Himself summed it up in the sentence I have just quoted—must we not candidly admit that we cannot conceivably get anywhere near "following" it? As well tell us to imitate the strength of Samson, or the genius of Shakespeare, as the moral character described by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount and embodied in His own life.

Now it is just here, of course, that the essential feature of the Christian view of life appears. For historic Christianity has never taught that the first thing a Christian (or a man drawn to Christ and Christianity) has to do is "copy Christ's example," or to be "like" Him. On the contrary, it has recognised, and even insisted, that he *cannot do it*, and that merely to tell him to do it would lead him to despair.

What Christianity says, and has always said, is that there is no possibility of a man being *like* Christ until and unless he is (in St. Paul's great phrase) "*in Christ.*" In other words, the Christian religion begins, not with man, but with God. It is a Gospel—a message or proclamation—not, in the first instance, about man, but about God: not about man and what he ought to do, but about God and what He has done.

The New Testament never contemplates the possibility of any man or woman, or any group of men and women, acquiring even a smattering of the real spirit of Christianity except in one way—the way, namely, of personal contact with Christ Himself. St. Paul does not urge his converts to "copy" Christ, or to "adopt" the Christian way of life; rather he bids them realise that they are "*in Christ.*" So, too, St. John tells his readers that they are "children of God": he does not bid them "try" Christianity or the Christian view of the meaning of things.

We shall see the supreme importance of this if we approach the matter from a rather different angle. We have learnt, as the result of modern scientific discovery, to think of man as the "crown of the universe." Expressed in very crude evolutionary terms, we may put it somewhat as follows. At the bottom of the scale there is matter—mere dead, inert "stuff"; then the lowest forms of vegetable life; then higher forms; then the lowest forms of animal life; then higher forms; and finally there is man, distinguished from all other animals by self-consciousness (the capacity to reflect on his own nature and experience, etc.) and the possession of reasoning faculties utterly beyond those of any other creature. Man is, indeed, an animal, bearing abundant traces, mental as well as physical, of his animal ancestry: but he, and he alone, is a *self-conscious, rational* animal.

But, for a Christian, that is not all there is to be said about the nature of man. To a Christian, what matters supremely is not man's origin, but his destiny; not what God has evolved him from, but what He has evolved him for; in short, God's *purpose* for him. And as to this purpose the Christian Church speaks unanimously. Let me quote from three authoritative formularies.

1. The "Penny Catechism" of the Roman Catholic Church. "*Q.*: Who made you? *Ans.*: God made me. *Q.*: Why did God make you? *Ans.*: God made me to know Him, love Him, and serve Him in this world, and to be happy with Him for ever in the next."

2. The Catechism of the Scottish Presbyterians. "*Q.*: What is the chief end of man? *Ans.*: Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him for ever."

3. And the Anglican Catechism, while it has no question and answer so obviously quotable in this connection as the above, assumes that the child

was created by God to be "a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven."

In other words, on the Christian view, man is meant by God—we can put it no less strongly than this—to be more than man. Man as a human being merely, a self-conscious, rational animal, is *not* the "crown of the universe." We must extend our evolutionary scale so as to include that *super-natural, super-human* life for which man was made. Here and now in this world man may enjoy a more-than-human life; he may share God's life. He was born for this.

St. John in his Prologue puts the matter thus: On those who fulfil a certain condition (which it is the divine will that all should fulfil) God confers the "right" or "privilege" (the Authorised Version translation "power" misses the meaning of the Greek word) of becoming, as without His gift they cannot and do not become, "children of God."

There are two ways of regarding religion. There is that which starts, as it were, from the side of man, and thinks of it as the search for God. And there is that which starts from God's side, and regards religion as primarily and essentially the divine quest for the soul of man. It is to this second type that, beyond all doubt, historic Christianity belongs. For it begins, as I said, with God. For us men and for our salvation the Son of God came down from heaven.

Christianity sets out from this tremendous doctrine of Revelation. We know what God is like, because He has told us, unveiled His mind and will and character to us—at *divers times and in divers manners*, but pre-eminently and finally in the life and death of Jesus Christ. We look at Jesus, and we say: "God is like that."

It is only if Jesus is the perfect portrait of God, only if *in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead in bodily form*, that we can speak of a "final" religion at

all : otherwise, Christianity must be included in the first type of religion just referred to, and we must confess that we do not yet know fully and certainly what the character of God may be. On the other hand, if indeed Christ is the perfect revelation of Deity, clearly the supreme duty and happiness of every human soul is to discover what is involved in that revelation, and to fashion his life on the discovery.

People sometimes discuss whether Christianity is suitable or adaptable to this or that race, or this or that temperament. From the Christian's point of view, all such discussions are beside the point ; for him, the question is not, "Is Christianity really suited to my particular needs ? Is it the sort of religion I should invent for myself ?" but, "How far is my life being lived in correspondence with the Truth ?" Similarly, people argue as to how far Christianity is practicable in the modern world of commerce and industry, with the implication that if they are *not* compatible it is Christianity which must be scrapped ; whereas for a Christian the problem is, How can industry and commerce be Christianised ?

A Christian's life in the world, then, must be viewed against this background of God and Eternity and the super-natural destiny of the human soul : otherwise it must inevitably appear meaningless and futile. This does not mean that a Christian is unconcerned with this world and its affairs : far from it, since this world is the site, so to speak, on which the Kingdom of God is to be built. But it does mean that he will think of himself as a citizen, not only of this world, but of another. It means that what we call the world of "nature" is a part only of the whole ; that it is transcended and interpenetrated by another level or order of reality—the order of "super-nature." But the same God is the ruler of both worlds ; and we must not think of this visible world and the unseen world as if they were two

separate spheres having no connection with each other : rather is it true that nature is a part of Super-nature, completed and, as it were, enclosed by it. It is the high privilege of man, since he is a super-natural as well as a natural being, to live in both worlds—if he will. The reality of the unseen world is not destroyed because some men do not recognise it.

*Earth's crammed with Heaven,
And every common bush afire with God.
But only he who sees, takes off his shoes ;
The rest sit round it and pluck blackberries.*

There is nothing *unnatural* about the super-natural. Nor shall we be in any danger of allowing our thoughts on the subject to become mechanical or materialistic, so long as we bear in mind that a man is most truly fulfilling his super-natural destiny when his life on the natural plane—his life, as we say, “in the world”—is governed by his relationship to God.

This relationship, maintained through prayer, is human life at its truest and highest. It is a strictly personal thing, maintained, as any fellowship must be, by persons—in this case, God and man. There are two great words which describe respectively God's part and man's in the maintenance of this personal contact which is the very heart of religion—Grace and Faith. By Grace we may understand the divine initiative which alone makes the fellowship possible—the hand of God outstretched to save and serve and heal and bless. Faith is the activity by which man reaches upward to grasp that outstretched hand, the human response to the divine invitation. A modern poet¹ has expressed in lines of great beauty God's changeless attitude to man (she is describing “A General Communion” in a great church):

¹ Mrs. Meynell.

*I saw this people as a field of flowers,
Each bought at such a price
The sum of unimaginable powers
Could no more than suffice,
A thousand single, central daisies they,
A thousand of the one :
For each, the entire monopoly of day ;
For each, the whole of the devoted sun.*

“The entire monopoly of day”; “the whole of the devoted sun”—that is Grace. But these human daisies must (as they can) turn their faces to the sun—and that is Faith.

We have travelled a long way from the popular view which regards a certain kind of conduct in our relationship to our fellow-men as the beginning and end of Christianity. A distinction has sometimes been drawn between religions of Being and religions of Doing, and Christianity has been included in the latter category. Now it is true, of course, that Christianity lays the utmost emphasis on right conduct ; it is a way of living—very early in its history it was described as *The Way*. Nevertheless, it is a religion of Being first—of being, in old-fashioned language, “right with God.” This is what our Lord taught when He put duty to God first and duty to man second ; when He said He had come to give men *eternal life* ; and when, again and again, He insisted that conduct of all kinds, good and evil, comes from the innermost “heart” of man, and is therefore the result of what he *is*—that, in other words, doing is the result of being : what we *are*, that we shall do. This is what St. Augustine meant when he said : “Love—and do what you like” ; meaning that if we love God and (as a consequence) our fellow-men, we shall only desire to do loving things. A Christian’s first concern, then, is with “being”—with the maintenance of that relationship to God for which man, as a spiritual being, was created. If this relationship is right all others will

be right ; if he is in real contact with his Father, his attitude to other members of the family will be what it should be ; if he loves God, he will love the brethren.

Christianity, then, is more than morality or right conduct. That is because it is a *religion* ; and all religions, good or bad, involve the belief in the possibility of relations between man and higher powers. The man who did his whole duty to his neighbour, but never breathed a prayer or named the name of God, would no doubt be a very wonderful person ; but he would not be a religious man, and certainly not a Christian.

Whence, then, comes the common idea that the essence of Christianity consists in being generous and honourable and unselfish, and that whether a man says his prayers or goes to church is of quite secondary importance, a matter of choice dependent on temperament or upbringing ? A little reflection will show us. Though in all truly Christian thought and theology love of God does come first, yet, if it is real love—or anything approaching to real love—it naturally and inevitably expresses itself in a particular kind of attitude towards others. For the more truly a man comes to know God, the more does he realise that it is a Father whom he is getting to know ; a Father, moreover, who has no favourites, and the whole of whose love is being poured out unceasingly upon every human soul ; a Father who longs to break down the barriers which separate any single member of the human race from fellowship with Himself. No one who has made any advance at all in the life of prayer would deny that this has been his own experience ; that, in other words, Christianity's claim that God is like Jesus—that God is Love—is verified by accepting it as true and actually putting it to the test. But a man who has had or is having this blessed experience cannot stop

there : he cannot forget the Father's other children, or fail to do what lies in his power to make the whole family life something like what it should be and might be. And so it comes about that in every age those who are in their hidden, interior lives learning to know and love God and to understand His mind and will are those whose outward, exterior lives most evidently express love and service of their fellows. It is this exterior life that the world sees. It sees that Christians are, more than other men, lovers of their kind ; and it concludes that the profession of Christianity is to be judged by this test—by unselfishness and service and self-sacrifice for others. This is a right conclusion : but the world is wrong when it takes the further step of concluding that therefore the *essence* of Christianity is the service of other men. To take this further step is to concentrate on the effects and ignore their cause, and to assume that goodness produces itself, as it were, from nowhere—that there can be smoke without fire. But the Christian himself knows better.

The last paragraph has assumed—what is notoriously not the case—that “all who profess and call themselves Christians” really are Christians, living the supernatural life of communion with God. But our argument is not affected by the fact that there are bad and unworthy Christians in the world. It is demonstrably true that most of the things in the world to-day—in the Western world at any rate—which good and wise men cherish and admire, are the outcome of essentially Christian thought and endeavour ; such things, for example, as the sense of “honour,” the civilised world's attitude to the suffering and the aged, the recognition that the strong have responsibilities and the weak have claims and rights, the care of children, and the position of women. These things are part of our common heritage : they saturate the atmosphere we live in :

we take them for granted. But historically they are the direct result of Christian influence—not of merely humanitarian philanthropy, but of men's love of God, expressed in the service of mankind. Perhaps the best way of realising how much a civilisation even only nominally Christian does in fact owe to the Christian spirit is to contrast it with a frankly non-Christian one. Thus, we may set the position of women in Europe against their position in a Mohammedan country such as Turkey,¹ or the mitigation, by legislation, of some of the worst evils of industrialism in England, against the comparative absence of such mitigation in China or Japan.²

One of the most serious and widespread delusions of the present day is the belief that Christian moral ideals, which are almost universally recognised as the only hope of our tottering and distracted civilisation, may be relied upon to continue, even though their supernatural inspiration and motive are given up. We ought thankfully to recognise that many of these ideals are now honoured and pursued by a great number of individuals, as well as groups and societies, who profess no allegiance to Jesus Christ, or even any belief in God. But we ought also to recognise their ultimate origin and character.

The life of a Christian, as we have seen, may be described as the contact and interaction of grace and faith. In the following pages we shall be concerned almost exclusively with faith in one form or another; with, that is to say, man's share in that fellowship with God which constitutes the Christian life. This introductory chapter is an attempt to put the matter in its right proportions at the outset, and to remind the reader that however much, in what follows, we

¹ Recent changes in Turkey in regard to this subject are of course the result of the penetration of Western influence, informed by Christian ideas.

² Except as the result of Christian influence.

may seem to be concentrating on human efforts and human activities, these are only seen in their true light when considered as man's response to the boundless yearning of his Father's love.

• II

THE GROWTH OF THE SOUL

THE subject of this chapter has been dealt with in numerous volumes, large and small, which have appeared in recent years, and it is likely that everything I have to say will be already familiar to many readers: in that case, this chapter can be omitted. It is, however, an important one for those whose knowledge of psychology is small—so important, that they had better read it twice!

If, as we have seen, the art of Christian living consists above everything else in the maintenance of a vital relationship between the soul and its Creator, it is clearly desirable that we should know something about the "soul"—about, that is to say, the material with which we have to deal, the tool we have to work with.

It is unnecessary for our present purpose to attempt a precise definition of the "soul": in the following pages I shall use the words "soul" and "mind" interchangeably, referring in these terms to that aspect of our nature which is neither intellect nor affections nor "will" in isolation, but which includes them all, and is the sustaining principle of our personality or "self": that, in short, to which we refer when we use the pronoun "I."

Investigation of the nature and working of the human mind is a department of science in which very important advances have been made within the last half-century or so. This investigation, which is what we mean by *Psychology*, is still, as sciences go, in its infancy, and no doubt much that is now accepted will have to be revised in the light of further knowledge: but certain principles, which were quite unsuspected by our grandfathers—and even by the fathers of all but the youngest of us—may reasonably be regarded as well established; and it is to some of the most important of these from our present point of view that we will now turn.

The best point of departure is from the instincts. It is easier to draw up a list of instincts—though no two psychologists' lists will be the same—than to say in simple terms what an instinct is: but briefly and untechnically it may be described as an inborn tendency to behave in a certain way in the face of a certain situation. Instinctive behaviour does not have to be *learnt*: it just happens, unless in some way it is checked or modified. No young animal has to be *taught* to eat in the presence of food, or to fly from danger. The instincts, then, are part of an animal's inheritance from the past; he starts with that endowment; so much at least of his character is *given*. And the human baby is a young animal—though he is more besides—and part at least of the mental equipment with which he starts life he shares with the rest of the animal world. He, too, sucks the breast without needing any instruction in the matter: he knows how to do it as soon as he comes into the world. He, too, cries and makes efforts to escape when he is threatened by danger.

We need not discuss whether a new-born baby has any further mental equipment: at any rate, the fact that he is from the start a "creature of instinct" is

the most important thing about him, since the formation of his character depends upon it.

Next let us notice an interesting fact. If we consider those animals which have attained the highest places in the course of evolution, we find that they may be divided into two classes. On the one hand, there are those provided with a large number of instincts, all of them of a highly specialised and elaborate character, so that there is hardly any need or opportunity for learning by experience or for control by intelligence. On the other hand, there are those animals with very few instincts, and these of an elementary and simple character, so that the individual's progress depends upon the extent to which he learns by experience to educate, develop, and control his instinctive gifts. To the first class belong—to name only those whose instinctive behaviour most closely resembles the intelligent behaviour of animals belonging to the second class—bees and ants and migratory birds. Of the second class man is obviously the most conspicuous example. In his case, further, the opportunity of profiting by experience is immensely increased by the length of time he takes to reach maturity, and by his power of speech.

A baby, then, while on the one hand his mind is not a mere blank page, since he inherits the instinctive powers of his kind, on the other hand cannot be said to have a "character," or to be a "personality" in any real sense. The growth of personality and the development of character are the result of the contact between the blind, driving force of his instincts on the one hand, and, on the other, the world in which he finds himself—in other words, his environment and experience. It follows from all this that the nature of the environment is of the utmost consequence in the formation of character. But before discussing this topic we may notice one or two other points.

I have already referred to the difficulty of drawing up a list of instincts. But, whatever classification we adopt, we shall find that each of them is intimately connected with one or more of three factors—viz., the self, the community, and sex. Thus, the instinct of self-assertion, and the parental instinct, as well as the directly sexual instinct, may all be concerned in the various forms which sexuality takes.

Finally, we may notice that each instinct appears to have a certain fairly definite feeling or emotion attaching to it, which is aroused whenever the instinct is called into action. The instinct to fly from danger is accompanied by the feeling of fear; that of repulsion (from certain smells and tastes, and from physical contact with slimy and slippery substances) by the feeling of disgust; that of curiosity (in face of an object or situation like, but not *quite* like, anything we have met before) by the feeling of wonder; and so on. The reader will be able to test the truth of all this by reflection on his own everyday experience.

So far we are dealing only with the lowest levels of mental life. It is clear that there can be no "character" in any real sense of the word until these primitive impulses and emotions are organised and controlled. We may think of them as so many men out of whom a general has to form an army. They are of enormous potential value: but they will not be able to function as a whole until a good deal of training and discipline has been undergone, and until they have learnt to work together. The whole process of character-building and education consists in this work of organising and unifying the individual's inherited mental powers. He is not responsible for having instincts. He is responsible for educating and controlling them. Let us briefly consider the most important of the ways in which this work is accomplished.

There are obviously elements in our mental life

more complex and advanced than those we have already discussed. What, for example, do we mean when we say that we "love" a person? Clearly, love is not an instinct in the sense described above. Nor is it a simple emotion, since it may and does continue in the absence of the object to which it is directed; a man goes on loving his wife or mother when they are not present, and even when he is not thinking of them. And yet love is manifestly built upon instincts and emotions, any of which may become predominant when the *object* of our love is in certain situations. Thus, when that object is threatened, our emotions of fear or anger may be aroused; we feel joy in its presence, and sorrow in its absence. More complicated than an instinct or emotion, then, though made up of both instincts and emotions, love is a *tendency* to certain emotions when the object of love is (or is believed to be) in certain situations; the emotion varying, as we have just seen, with the situation, so that the same object may at different times arouse in us every possible emotion.

The name by which psychologists distinguish such complex mental states as this is *Sentiment*. It is important that we should be clear about the nature of Sentiments, because, as we shall see, the growth of personality depends on forming them. (The reader will observe that we are using the word Sentiment here in its technical, psychological sense, which has next to nothing in common with the various meanings attaching to the word in popular speech.) A Sentiment exists, then, when several emotional tendencies are all centred in the idea of some *object*; and it involves a disposition to experience the appropriate emotions when that object is (or is thought of as being) in a situation likely to stir those emotions into activity. (I fear all this is rather difficult: but it is hardly possible to put it into quite simple language: a Sentiment is a complicated thing!) The object

round which a Sentiment is built may, of course, be a person, or a thing, or an idea, or a combination of all these (another Sentiment, for example); this may be realised if we think of some of the more important Sentiments—Love, Hate, Respect.

In a summary such as this, it is not possible to discuss the Sentiments in any detail. But something must be said about the most important of them, and about the manner in which all Sentiments are formed.

From the psychological point of view—and that is all we are concerned with in this chapter—the Sentiment which colours and to a great extent determines the character of all the rest is that of which the individual himself is the object, and which is built up round his idea of himself—the Self-Regarding Sentiment, as it is called. By this we must understand the whole mass of thoughts and opinions which the individual comes gradually to hold about himself—his nature, his worth, his capacities, his destiny, and so on. It is clear that this Sentiment is one of extraordinary dynamic force, and must affect the development of all the other Sentiments: it tends to absorb into itself every experience which the individual encounters, and at the same time to be modified by experience. Nothing, from the dawn of consciousness till death, can happen to any of us without in some way influencing his Sentiment of Self-regard.

Just as the development of any at all unified personality depends, as we saw, on the organisation of instincts and emotions into Sentiments, so the formation of a “strong” character of any kind depends on the subordination of all the Sentiments to the control of one of them. Think of any man you know whom you recognise as a real force and power in his own line—one who succeeds, who “gets there”—and you will recognise that he owes his success to the dominating place which some one

Sentiment occupies in his general mental make-up. The man, on the other hand, whose Sentiments are unregulated and undisciplined, never achieves much, for the simple reason that all his Sentiments are equally strong, now one of them being temporarily in the ascendant and now another, so that there is no more chance of real progress than there would be in a company of soldiers who took it in turn to act as commanding officer.

We observe, then, that strength of character depends on two things: on the preponderating influence of some one Sentiment; and on the nature of the individual's Sentiment regarding himself, since this is bound to affect, and to be affected by, the other. Thus, a man whose principal Sentiment is centred in the idea of money and the conviction that to amass a fortune is the secret of happiness, is likely enough to succeed in becoming rich if at the same time he has unbounded faith in his own financial acumen and business capacity.

Two final points may be mentioned: they will be referred to again. The kind of Sentiments a person develops will almost entirely depend on his environment—and especially (this is important) on the *persons* among whom, as he goes through life, he finds himself. Obviously it is from his environment that the central *objects* of his Sentiments will be taken. And, secondly, the growth of any Sentiment will depend on the degree of attention, especially in the early stages of its development, which the individual gives to the object on which it is based. A man to whom all sounds are alike is not likely to form a Sentiment of music; and love-at-first-sight which is not followed by courtship will never grow into the Sentiment of love.

It will be clear, I hope, to any reader who has followed the argument of this chapter, that our

knowledge of mental processes has a direct and important bearing upon the problem before us in this book—the problem, namely, of how to ensure and foster the union of the soul with God, and how to bring its activities into harmonious co-operation with the purposes of God.

But at this point a not uncommon misunderstanding may be referred to. There are those who assert that the life of the soul is a thing so much apart and distinguishable from the rest of our mental activity that the same laws do not hold good for both, so that for the soul's development any knowledge of psychology is both useless and unnecessary.

This criticism can, I think, be easily met, because—though it is often and honestly made—it is simply not in accordance with facts. Perhaps the most obvious result of modern psychological study has been to demonstrate how utterly untenable is the old view which held that the “soul” of man—the instrument, that is to say, whereby he holds communion with the unseen world—is an element entirely distinguishable from the rest of his mental constitution. To say this is not at all the same thing, observe, as saying that psychology has disproved the existence of the soul: on the contrary (though this is a difficult subject upon which we need not embark here), we must postulate a “soul” as the basis and “subject” of the mental experiences which psychology investigates. But it is no longer possible to hold that, for example, the “mind” and the “soul” are two different things, and that a man prays and worships with a part of his being which only comes into action in prayer and worship; or that the ability to know God and the capacity to appreciate beauty in nature or in art are two distinguishable “faculties,” one of them belonging to the soul and the other to the mind.

For centuries—from the time of Aristotle until comparatively recent years—it was usual to explain

(though, of course, it was no explanation at all) all human qualities by saying that man possessed a "faculty" for each of them: he thought because he had a faculty of thinking, loved because he had a faculty of loving, and so on: and his capacity for knowing God was ascribed to the faculty which he possessed in virtue of having a soul; religion, in short, was the special (and only) faculty of the soul.

This way of thinking is impossible now. Psychology teaches us that each of these so-called "faculties" is a complicated mental activity developed from a number of more primitive elements, as we have seen in our discussion of the growth of the Sentiments. And the "religious faculty" is seen, on analysis, to be, not a simple, ready-made capacity for knowing and loving God, but the concentration in a particular direction of impulses and desires and interests which are also concerned in other activities of the mind.

People speak loosely of the "religious instinct." There is no such instinct: no inborn, inherited capacity which impels the human animal to react in a certain way to God as inevitably as his instinct of self-preservation impels him to react in a certain way to the sight of food when he is hungry. When we say that religion is "natural" to man, we mean that, provided as he is from the beginning with certain instincts and emotions, it is no less natural that their dynamic force should be regulated and unified to form a "God-Sentiment," than that it should also be regulated and unified, in other directions, to form a Sentiment of love for his wife or of respect for old age. But the main point to notice is, that when we subject the thing called "religion" to critical examination; when we ask, Of what simpler elements is it composed? so far from being obliged to conclude that it is unanalysable, a kernel beyond which we cannot penetrate, we find that it is a complex

structure formed, to a certain pattern, out of elements and materials which are employed to form other patterns as well. Out of the same materials an architect may build a cathedral or a railway-station. Out of the same mental elements a man may build a God-Sentiment or a Sentiment of hate.

III

CHRIST AND THE SOUL

THE latter part of the last chapter was in the nature of a digression, though an important one. We have now to go back, and see how some of the principles described bear on the theory and practice of man's response to God.

"Religion exists," a recent writer has said, "to foster the God-Sentiment." The religious man, that is to say, is he whose thoughts and ideals and strivings are centred in the idea of God, who is thus the "Object" of the Sentiment. Another writer describes the "Christ-Sentiment" as "falling in love with Jesus"; he to whom this Sentiment is the master-light of all his seeing and being will inevitably, though in large measure unconsciously—and increasingly so as the Sentiment develops—frame his thought and conduct in accordance with what he conceives to be the mind of Christ, of which he will come to know more, the more intimate his association with Christ becomes.

We may observe that a great part of the teaching of Our Lord may be expressed as the inculcation of a God-Sentiment. The basis of Jewish moral conduct

had been the Law, a series of commands and prohibitions which in themselves, even apart from the rabbinical traditions and interpretations with which they had been hedged about, exhibited the inevitable defect of every moral code—the defect, namely, inherent in the fact that all law deals primarily with outward acts, and not with the interior springs of action ; so that, in regard to an alleged infraction of any particular law, the only question to be settled is whether the conduct referred to does or does not “come within the meaning of the Act” which forbids such conduct. Our Lord, with His penetrating knowledge of “what is in man,” and of the truth that it is out of the “heart” of man that all his behaviour proceeds, replaced all such particular injunctions and prohibitions by a controlling and absorbing Sentiment as the ideal basis of conduct.

The experience of St. Paul is the classic vindication of this principle. As a devout and scrupulous Pharisee, he had discovered that merely to be told not to do this or that, so far from helping him not to do it, actually inclined him to do it, partly because (in some cases) the prohibition itself put into his mind the idea of doing something which otherwise he might possibly have had no desire to do, but chiefly because his very abhorrence of the possibility that he *might* break the law acted so powerfully as a “suggestion” that in instance after instance it actually proved stronger than his frantic effort not to break it, so that he broke it in spite of himself. (This second reason is of enormous importance : it applies to us as well as to St. Paul ; and we shall return to it in a later chapter.) As St. Paul came more and more under the influence of the Master who had appeared to him on the road to Damascus, the “dominion” of the Law (as he called it) ceased to influence him. This did not mean, however, that he grew careless about its precepts, but only that he now kept them, not merely

because they were enjoined, but because he no longer wanted to transgress them. He did not steal, not because the Law told him not to steal, but because he no longer had the inclination to steal. How could stealing offer any temptation or attraction to one who was living in intimate friendship with Jesus Christ?

The "object" of the Christ-Sentiment is not, be it noted, the memory and inspiration of a Jewish teacher who has been dead for two thousand years, but the living, loving, reigning Lord of the universe, with whom personal relations at this moment are not less, but more, possible than they were during the days of His flesh. Here we touch on fundamental truths of theology. This is not the place to discuss or defend them: but it is important to insist that the Christ-Sentiment, in the sense in which the phrase is used in these pages, belongs essentially to that super-natural order which has already been discussed in Chapter I. It would no doubt be possible to describe as a Christ-Sentiment the admiration, loyalty and reverence which many men feel for the Jesus of history who shrink from calling themselves (in any full sense) "Christians," and would never dream of addressing Him in prayer. The feeling towards Our Lord felt by such men might certainly be called a Christ-Sentiment; as other men have a Socrates-Sentiment, or a George Washington-Sentiment, or a Mrs. Eddy-Sentiment, and so forth. But obviously it is not in that sense that I am using the phrase here.

We saw that the formation of character (that is, of Sentiments) is the result of the contact between instinctive energy and the experience and environment encountered by the individual as he goes through life, and that the most potent factors in his environment are the *persons* with whom he is thrown into most intimate relations; so that a Sentiment of love for a person is stronger than one of admiration for an

abstract ideal.¹ What limits, then, can we set to the power and fruitfulness of the Christ-Sentiment as here understood?

We have seen also that the nature of our "self-regarding" Sentiment is of primary importance, largely because it tends to influence, and as it were to absorb into itself, all our other Sentiments. Let us consider this a little further. What will the Christian's Sentiment of self-regard be like? What broad, general picture of himself will he have?

Perhaps the best answer to this question is that his own view of himself will be God's view. He will tend to regard himself, for instance, less in the light of what he is than of what he might be, less as the feeble, wilful, vacillating creature of circumstance he appears to the world and (but for this consideration) to himself, than as the "child of God," endowed with the super-natural privilege of union with God, and capable of growing in that union. This does not mean that he will be a self-conscious prig. But the Christian virtue of humility, while it fills a man with the realisation that without God he can achieve or become nothing worth achieving or becoming, encourages him also to believe that all goodness and truth and beauty are within his reach in virtue of, and in proportion to, his union with Christ, the source and sustainer of them all.

It is quite untrue that Christianity takes a low view of human nature, or that it tends to thwart and repress the natural urge to freedom, creativeness, and fulness of living. On the contrary, while it teaches that human nature *in itself* can never reach the truest freedom, or the best and most satisfying levels of living, Christianity sets no limits to the possibilities which belong as of right to the individual or the community which has once set its feet on the

¹ Thus St. Paul's Christ-Sentiment, for example, was more potent than his previous Law-Sentiment.

way of fellowship with God. *The glorious liberty of the children of God—the rich inheritance of the saints :* the New Testament abounds in such phrases, which give the lie, no less than does the Christian's own experience, to such a picture of the influence of Christianity on men's lives as is expressed in Swinburne's lines :

*Thou hast conquered, O pale Galilean !
The world has grown grey with Thy breath.*

It is doubtless the Christian doctrine of sin which, imperfectly understood, has given rise to the strange idea that Christianity takes a low view of human nature. To the problem of sin we shall return in a later chapter. But we may observe here the often neglected fact that in Christian theology the doctrine of sin does not stand alone : it is part of a system of thought which includes the doctrine of redemption. The whole point about sin is, precisely, that it can be redeemed : this horrible, unescapable thing is actually the material out of which, by the power and goodness of God, a peace and victory are won which far transcend any other peace or victory known in human experience. There are types of religion—even types which claim the title of Christian—which make light of sin, or even (as in Christian Science) solve the problem it creates by denying its existence. Christianity is truer to what is, perhaps, the most fundamental fact of human life—namely, the universal sense that something is wrong and awry with us, that we are other and less than we might be—that, in short, “whether or no there was ever a Fall, at least we are fallen.”

The Christian's sentiment of self-regard, then, will include the recognition that he is a sinner : but, if it is truly Christian, it will not stop there. For the Christian's conviction that he is a sinner is less vital than his faith that by his fellowship with Christ the

power of sin over him is—it may be gradually and almost imperceptibly—being undermined. Above all, he knows that it is thus, at any rate, that God regards him; not as the wretched thing he would be in himself apart from Christ, but as *in Christ*, in the light of the change Christ has already wrought in him and will bring at last to perfection. That is God's view of him, and it ought to be his own.

We have now to consider how it is that the Christ-Sentiment comes into being, and how it is maintained when once formed, so that it attaches to itself the dynamic force and energy belonging to all the instincts and emotions which are its constituent parts. The answer to this question lies in two words, *Attention* and *Interest*.

It is clear that we can only voluntarily attend to a person or a thing in which we are, for the time at least, interested; and that, conversely, interest stimulates and encourages attention. And so, for the formation and maintenance of the Christ-Sentiment, *attention to Christ* is a fundamental necessity. But we shall only "attend" to Him if He arouses sufficient "interest" in our minds to make us wish to do so. How, then, is "interest" in Jesus Christ aroused?

Modern psychology has paid a good deal of attention to one of the ways in which this happens. It is a commonplace of Christian thought to say that the primary need of every soul is conversion, the "turning" of the whole personality away from sin towards God. This may be a sudden, catastrophic occurrence, or it may be gradual, continuous, unobserved. It is in the former of the two types of conversion that the academic psychologist is chiefly interested. And while we remember that it is not always so, we may agree that it is thus that a man's "interest" in Christ sometimes begins, so far as appearances go. I say, so far as appearances go

because it would seem that these cases are to be understood as the sudden breaking down of barriers of resistance to the acceptance of the religious way of thought and life—an acceptance which has already taken place in the innermost recesses of the man's mind—rather than as the irruption into the mind of something utterly and altogether new, of which the man has had hitherto no knowledge or experience whatever. The interest, that is to say, which at the crisis of conversion leaps into full-fledged being, has been *latent* for some time past. Both these characteristics of sudden conversion—the impression of newness and irresistibility made on the individual who experiences it, and the preparation for it—may be seen in any of the classical cases of conversion of this type. Here is the story, in his own words, of a living Indian Christian, the Sadhu Sundar Singh :

“Preachers and Christians in general had often come to me and I used to resist them and persecute them. When I was out in any town I got people to throw stones at Christian preachers. I would tear up the Bible and burn it when I had a chance. In the presence of my father I cut up the Bible and other Christian books and put kerosene oil upon them and burnt them. I thought this was a false religion and tried all I could to destroy it. I was faithful to my own religion, but I could not get any satisfaction or peace, though I performed all the ceremonies and rites of that religion. So I thought of leaving it all and committing suicide. Three days after I had burnt the Bible, I woke up about three o'clock in the morning, had my usual bath, and prayed, ‘O God, if there is a God, wilt thou show me the right way, or I will kill myself.’ . . . I was praying and praying, but got no answer; and I prayed for half an hour longer hoping to get peace. At 4.30 a.m. I saw something of which I had no idea at all previously. In the room where I was praying I saw a great light. I thought the place was on fire.

I looked round, but could find nothing. Then the thought came to me that this might be an answer that God had sent me. Then as I prayed and looked into the light I saw the form of the Lord Jesus Christ. It had such an appearance of glory and love. If it had been some Hindu incarnation I would have prostrated myself before it. But it was the Lord Jesus Christ, whom I had been insulting a few days before. I felt that a vision like this could not come out of my own imagination. I heard a voice saying in Hindustani, 'How long will you persecute me? I have come to save you; you were praying to know the right way. Why do not you take it?' The thought then came to me, 'Jesus Christ is not dead, but living, and it must be He Himself.' So I fell at His feet, and got this wonderful Peace which I could not get anywhere else. This is the joy I was wishing to get. This was heaven itself. When I got up, the vision had all disappeared; but although the vision disappeared the peace and joy have remained with me ever since."¹

The Sadhu's interest in Christ had clearly been derived, in the first instance, from "preachers and Christians in general." We may assume with confidence that their talk had largely been of the story of the earthly life of Our Lord; while the Sadhu implies, further, that he had been driven by their conversation to study that life in the gospels for himself. In his case the interest thus aroused had been thwarted and repressed by other powerful and conflicting ones. But it is thus, undoubtedly, that the ordinary Christian, brought up by Christian parents and among people themselves seeking to live the Christian life, is initiated into that knowledge *about* Christ which must precede any knowledge (and even the desire for any knowledge) *of* Christ. Here, then, we may notice again the incalculable importance of the human

¹ *The Sadhu*, Streeter and Appasamy, pp 5-7.

and personal elements in our environment for the formation of sentiments and character.

It is always the consciousness of need satisfied, emptiness filled, helplessness fortified, which generates the sentiment for God in the human heart :

*Thou, O Christ, art all I want ;
More than all in Thee I find.*

The sense of satisfaction may come suddenly, as in conversion, when the individual is seized with such a transport of joyous emotion that henceforward Christ is the centre of his life ; or, more frequently, it may be a more normal, gradual process. But some familiarity with the facts of our Lord's earthly life—with, that is to say, God's revelation of Himself made once and for all in time and space—is always involved.

The growth of the Christ-sentiment in the soul is fostered, not by the soul's pre-occupation with itself and its needs, but by the contemplation (more, or less, intense and profound as the case may be) of Christ. This is of course only another way of saying that men do not find God. He finds them : and, once they have caught the vision of what He is, they realise what the freedom and the joy of His fellowship must mean to their hitherto limited and undeveloped lives.

So it is always. We have mentioned two of the ways in which interest in Christ is initiated and continued. There are others. A student of the world's problems to-day may well come—as many students do come—to the conclusion that there is no solution for them, and that civilisation has no future before it ; and then suddenly he may see that there is one, and only one, solution—the Christian way of life for men and societies. A philosopher may discover that Christ is the obvious keystone in the arch built by all the thinkers and sages. An historian may find that

Christ answers and gives meaning to the otherwise inexplicable march of events. But two factors are always involved in any illumination which produces such interest in Christ: first, some contact with other persons to whom He is a living reality; secondly, some acquaintance with His character as portrayed in the gospels. There are always involved, in other words, first the Church, secondly the Bible.

Another volume in this series deals specifically with the Church, and with the obligations of membership therein. Here it must suffice to remind the reader of the essentially corporate character of Christianity. No one with any acquaintance with Christianity, as described in the New Testament or manifested in the lives of the saints, could entertain the delusion that it regards religion as "a purely individual affair between the soul and God." The Christian religion was not, as a matter of historical fact, so presented to the world in the first instance: nor is it as an individualistic religion that it has leavened human society. For God's dealings are with man as he is—a "social animal," dependent on his brethren for the growth of his personality, including the capacity for fellowship with his Father.

The importance of the Bible is a further instance of our dependence on others for our knowledge of God, and so for our fellowship with Him. But it is not exactly from this point of view that I want to draw attention to the urgent necessity of real and intimate familiarity with the gospels. There are two reasons for this. In the first place, as we saw in Chapter I., Christianity is rooted in history. It begins with the Incarnation,¹ and is conditioned throughout by the belief that, however else God may be found, He is to be found pre-eminently in Jesus: *He that hath seen*

¹ Prepared for by the Revelation to the Jews—also an historical process.

Me hath seen the Father. Any form of prayer or spiritual education or self-discipline which tends to ignore or belittle these fundamental historical facts stands condemned as less than Christian. And again: Jesus, *the same yesterday and to-day and forever*, is the revelation of the nature and character of God, not merely as God was during those thirty years, but as He is eternally and unchangeably, *yesterday and to-day and forever*. But though the character of God is eternal, the perfect revelation of it to men has only been made once, and the record of that revelation is to be found nowhere but in the four gospels. It has been the assumption of this chapter that "we needs must love the Highest when we see" Him, when we have some real appreciation of what He is like. But to see Him as He is to-day we must see Him as He was in the days of His flesh. There is no other way; and no other spiritual exercises or religious practices can ever take the place of constant reading of the gospels, with hearts and minds as open as God may see fit to make them in answer to our prayers. It goes without saying that we shall read them with whatever help and guidance we may be able to get from other people and from books.

Interest is the same thing as attention not fully awake, and attention is interest in action. In these last pages it has been necessary, for the sake of clearness, to treat them as two distinct and separate things. Of course, they are not that. Interest must be continually stimulated and nourished by the training of that attention which at first, it may be, is all but effortless and inevitable. Broadly speaking, the Christian life, regarded from the human side, is the continuous education and training of these two factors of interest and attention. The growth of the Christ-Sentiment is the result of the contact between subject (the soul) and Object (Christ): the Christian life is to be understood, then, as the progressive submission of

the subject to the influence of the Object, or as the development of those habits and qualities in the soul which shall enable Christ to make of it what He will.

IV

THE SCIENCE OF PRAYER

PRAYER is described by an old writer as "the ascent of the mind to God" and the definition can hardly be improved upon, whether we think of prayer in the wide or the narrow sense. In this and the following chapter we shall be concerned with a particular, specialised kind of prayer. But it is well to remember that the whole life of the Christian may be described as *ascensio mentis in Deum*: at no moment ought he to be altogether unable to say with the Psalmist, *Unto Thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul*. Certainly, it is as nothing less than the consecration of the whole of life that the saints have always insisted on regarding prayer. Thus, for example, the great pioneers in the history of monasticism, concerned to ensure that those who retired from the world and gave themselves wholly to "prayer" should be as open and responsive as possible to divine influences, gave to the word a far larger meaning than we commonly do. Only the humble and receptive soul can "ascend to God" and hear His Voice; and so the monastic ideal has always laid great emphasis on intellectual activity, on obedience to earthly superiors, and on the cultivation of a charitable judgment of other people, as well as on "prayer" in the restricted sense of the word, and has included all four of these things in the life of

prayer, the life designed to produce that spirit of humility and receptiveness which alone can bring the soul into fellowship with God.

Not otherwise can the ordinary Christian find God. For him, too, prayer is more than the deliberate and conscious concentration of his attention upon God at special times. Nevertheless, his life in its totality will not be a prayer without these moments of prayer. Shallow, superficial minds sometimes forget this, and criticise the importance attributed, for example, to morning and evening prayers. Surely, they say, we ought to be able to speak to God at all times and any time? Yes, we ought: but the man who has never disciplined himself to pray at certain times does not, as a matter of experience, naturally and spontaneously lift up his soul unto God at all times.

We are dealing here, then, with prayer in its specialised and restricted forms, without prejudice to the truth that *all* the activities of a Christian's life may ideally be described as so many aspects of prayer.

It is probable that many of the objections commonly levelled at the practice of prayer, even by religious people, would never occur to them if they really grasped its nature. Some of these objections, in fact—we will glance at one or two of them later—do not really arise in regard to Christian prayer at all; they are difficulties caused by various popular misconceptions and misrepresentations due to the persistence, among Christian people, of pagan ways of thinking.

The central features of Christian prayer are not really difficult to understand, if only we will go the right and obvious way about learning them. We have in the gospels not only a specimen or model prayer which our Lord taught His disciples to use, but also more than one account of His own prayers.

The Lord's Prayer has been analysed and commented upon so often, and in such easily accessible books, that I need not discuss it at any length here. There are two points, however, to which special attention may be drawn. We are to pray first—that is to say, our thoughts and desires and supplications are to be specially concerned—for the hallowing of God's Name, the coming of His Reign, and the doing of His Will, in earth as in heaven—in the world of "nature," that is, as in the Unseen world. (We must remember that the clause *in earth, as in heaven*, refers to and "qualifies" the three preceding ones, and not only the last of the three. What we pray when we use the Lord's Prayer is : "Hallowed be Thy Name—here on earth, as it is hallowed in heaven ; Thy Kingdom come—on earth, as it has come already in heaven ; Thy Will be done—on earth, as it is perfectly done by saints and angels in heaven.")

The third petition, *Thy Will be done*, may for our present purpose be regarded as a summary and explanation of the whole prayer, and so as an indication of the general character of all Christian prayer.

Prayer is directed, then, to the doing of God's Will : it is a means towards this end. Two conclusions of great importance follow. In the first place : since Our Lord teaches us to pray that God's Will may be done, He warns us, clearly, of the possibility that, without our prayers, God's Will may go, to some extent at least, undone and unrealised. *Not everything that happens is the Will of God.* Secondly : if (as the opening words of the Lord's Prayer, and the whole teaching of Christ, assume) God is our loving Father, then to pray that His Will may be done is to pray for our own and our fellows' health and happiness and general well-being. *Whatsoever hinders or destroys these things, therefore, is contrary to the Will of God.*

The extraordinarily widespread misunderstanding, and even perversion, of these truths in popular thought can never, surely, cease to astonish the instructed Christian mind. What a truly amazing confusion of thought is betrayed by the fact—which few would deny—that the popular mind attributes everything that happens, in the world and in the life of the individual, howsoever and by whomsoever caused, to “the Will of God”; and, especially, that the particular events which most naturally evoke the comment “It is God’s Will” should be, not those which obviously proceed from some beneficent and beautiful Source, but those which arouse, in the instructed Christian, a real difficulty as to the love of God for His children! An earthquake, a pestilence, a war : many men resign themselves to these things as “no doubt God’s Will.” How often are such men moved to the thought of God’s Will by a sunset or a garden, the triumph of some righteous cause, or the discovery of a plague-bacillus? It is considered a mark of piety to ascribe a child’s death, or a motor-accident, to the Will of God : but many people would suspect as strange and exaggerated the same sentiment expressed at the thought of a woman’s beauty, or a successful operation, or a noble symphony.

This misconception amounts to nothing less than idolatry. It is—if Jesus is the perfect portrait of deity—the worship of a false god, not of the God whom Jesus revealed. Men’s religious practices, not less than their code of behaviour, depend on their idea of God, and any consideration of prayer must begin with that. Prayer is a spiritual force which helps towards the realisation of God’s Will. This does not mean, observe, that if I pray that the Will of God may be done in some particular matter, or in regard to a particular person, it will be done necessarily and as a matter of course. I pray, for example, that A., who is a sinner, may turn

from his sin to God. There can be no question that such a prayer is according to the Will of God ; that its fulfilment would represent the doing of His Will. *But other wills are involved besides His.* That is the point ; and in any matter in which human wills are concerned, their co-operation with God's Will is necessary before His can be accomplished. God has made men free, which is to say that He has made them free to resist, as well as to co-operate with, His Will for them. He will not compel A. to repent. No doubt, in answer to our prayers, He will so order things that A.'s opportunities of repentance are increased, and that he may be moved towards repentance : but in the last resort some personal co-operation on A.'s part is necessary—some (it may be very slight) movement of his own will—before our prayer for the doing of God's Will for him can be answered. And so with our prayers for ourselves. It is useless to pray that God will "make" us good. He won't.¹ He longs that we should be good. He will give us every opportunity and all His grace. But so long as we are free—so long, that is to say, as we are human beings—so long will it be possible for us to resist or to fail to respond to Him, and to choose evil rather than good, and so to delay or to prevent His Will being done.

How, then, it may be asked, can prayer help? Surely the answer to that question lies, again, in the character of God, and above all in the method of His working in the world. God is Love, and His method is always, and only, the method of love. Now prayer, as the ascent of the mind towards God, who is Love, is not only a laying of ourselves open to the inflowing of God's love, but is in itself an act of love on our part, and therefore increases love by expressing itself, as any emotion is increased and

¹ Indeed—quite simply—He can't.

intensified by being expressed. To pray that God's Will may be done—and, as we have seen, any prayer, whether of supplication for ourselves or of intercession for others, should be expressible in those terms—is to pray that a greater measure of love may be released and set in motion in our own lives and theirs.

And this, in true prayer, is exactly what happens. When we say that prayer is not persuading God to do our will, but the effort to make our wills co-operate with His, that is what we mean. For the Will of God is the love of God in action. Prayer, as loving submission to God, as the loving desire to know and to do His Will, does not, as we have seen, *guarantee* that His Will will be done, even in the particular case which is the subject of our prayer: but it enormously increases the chance of that happening, because it increases the amount of love available—God's love, and ours—and love is the greatest spiritual force in the universe. Prayer creates the atmosphere in which God can work.

The second point to which I wish to draw attention is this. Because God is our Father, and not a mere impersonal "force" or "influence," the practice of prayer involves the belief that in response to our prayers He acts personally. He is, in philosophical language, transcendent as well as immanent. He "acts" on the world from without as well as from within. He is in the world which He has made, but not confined within it. *The Lord sitteth above the watersflood, and the Lord remaineth a King for ever.* To a pantheist—one who identifies God with the world, and denies Him any existence apart from and outside the world, which is His "garment"—prayer can never get beyond "meditation," the act or habit of allowing the mind to dwell on the thought of God, or (at most) of passive submission to His influence. But a Christian believes that God is able

to *do things*, to act in particular ways, to take sides, to control events, and to shift the scenes on which the drama of human history is played; and the Christian prays accordingly. He does not shrink, for instance, from definite petitions, or from asking for material as well as for spiritual blessings.

The petition in the Lord's Prayer, *Give us this day our daily bread*, is not the Christian's only warrant for this. It is dangerous, indeed, to press the distinction between "material" and "spiritual" too far. The fact of the Incarnation—the fact that God chose a human body and the conditions of physical life to be the means whereby the souls of men should be redeemed—has for ever consecrated "matter" as the vehicle of spiritual benefits. In His earthly Ministry our Lord, though He bade men *seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness*, was far from refusing to minister to men's physical needs: on the contrary, He healed their bodily sicknesses and disabilities whenever He was asked to do so, satisfied the natural hunger of multitudes, and provided the wherewithal of hospitality at the wedding-feast of Cana.

If any further justification be needed for praying for material goods, it may be found in the increasing attention which in these days we are learning to pay to the intimate relation between body and mind. No illness or disease, for example, is ever either purely physical or purely mental: both body and mind are concerned, if not always in the origin, yet most certainly always in the progress and continuance of sickness. And while, on the one hand, recovery of the body may be delayed by some mental worry, or fear, or perplexity, on the other hand spiritual health and advance are not seldom checked, choked, and perverted by physical disability. Pain will interfere with one man's capacity to pray; and, conversely, prayer and the interior peace which it brings

will react on another's physical constitution so as to render it more capable of resisting pain or of throwing off the microbe of some disease. Man in the conditions of life in this world is never body or mind in isolation: he is *one*—body and mind together. And we must treat him so in prayer. And so, because it is God's Will that men should be *every whit whole*, we shall not hesitate to pray, for ourselves and others, for bodily as well as spiritual health and healing.

But God has not only made each individual a unity: He has made the whole human race a unity. We are members, whether we like it or no, one of another, and we cannot, if we would, alter the unescapable law, that *if one member suffer all the members suffer with it*. This fact has a very important bearing on the question just considered. For it means, clearly, that my spiritual condition is affected, not only by the spiritual condition of others (which is obvious), but by their physical condition too. It means nothing less than that my sickness or health of body *and* mind is bound up with, and affects, and is affected by, the bodily *and* mental health or sickness of the whole human race.

We touch here one of the most profound mysteries of human life. We cannot trace, of course, all the particular workings and applications of this law of life as God has in His wisdom ordered it. But the general inference from the unity of the human race seems unescapable. If so, it would seem to lend very weighty support to the belief that all sickness and disease are ultimately the result of sin, though not necessarily, of course, of the sin of the sick or diseased person. I repeat that the workings of this connection between sin and disease cannot always be traced. But the recognition that my sickness may be in some mysterious way connected with sin (understood here, so as to include the sins of non-Christians,

as any individual's refusal to live by the light that is in him) at the other end of the world—or in the next street—must surely have an important influence (among others with which we cannot deal here) on our thoughts about prayer. It must help us to understand something of the tremendous significance of the word *Our* at the beginning of the Lord's Prayer, and to realise the utter impossibility of any at all truly Christian prayer—any form or idea of prayer based even remotely and superficially on the Lord's Prayer—being concerned with self to the exclusion of the rest of God's children.

For self-centred is precisely what Christian prayer is not and cannot be. It is not a dodge, or a spell, of which we happen to possess the secret, and the use of which gives us, as it were, a "pull" with God to the disadvantage of our neighbours. The distinction between Christian and pagan prayer may be illustrated by contrasting the former with the use of mascots. The man who with any seriousness wears a mascot believes that the mere possession of it ensures him (and no one else) some amount of luck and good fortune, quite independently of his moral and spiritual character. The man who prays does so in order that his character may be more and more conformed to the character of God, who is Love. To submit our souls to God in prayer is to increase our capacity for love, and so for any suffering and self-sacrifice that may be necessary in the service of others.

It should be noted that not all prayer is "mystical" in the proper sense of that word; that is to say, accompanied by a conscious awareness of the presence of Him to whom it is addressed. A word may be said here about a difficulty which many devout people feel. Prayer, we are told (they say) is communion or converse with God: but how can we be sure that we are in any direct relationship to Him on those occasions when we do not "feel" His presence?

This difficulty tends to disappear when we realise that it confuses "awareness" with contact. If God is omnipresent, and if we owe our existence from moment to moment to Him, then clearly there is no possibility of our ever *not* being in contact with Him. We should make a grievous error if we measured the reality of our prayers by the feelings or emotions experienced at our times of prayer. To some temperaments such emotions come easily and spontaneously, but not to all, and they are by no means always a proof that the soul has been in union with God. In nothing is the teaching of the great mystics themselves—the masters of the art and science of prayer—more unanimous than in this: that its value and reality are not to be measured by the emotions, but by the fruits it produces; and that if certain temperaments deliberately seek for emotions and "feelings" and what *feels like* a direct and immediate awareness of God, they will achieve it—but by the aid, not of God, but of Satan! The delights and ardours which sometimes accompany the more advanced types of prayer are, we must always remember, the gift of God. He gives them, or withholds them, at His pleasure. To seek them is no part of the individual's task in prayer.

In the deepest sense, it should be noted, the whole activity of prayer, including man's part in it, is the activity of God. For it is only by the grace of God, only in virtue of his super-natural endowment as a "child of God," that man is capable of any prayer at all: prayer is essentially an activity, therefore, which takes place on the super-natural level of his being. It is the Spirit within us that inclines us to prayer. So St. Paul urges the Ephesian Church to pray "in the Spirit"; and in the Epistle to the Romans says, *The Spirit also helpeth our infirmity: for we know not how to pray as we ought; but the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us.* And this is true, whether we think of

prayer in the general or the restricted sense. It is only, for example, by the Spirit's guidance that our study of the Mind of Christ in the New Testament will result in sound conclusions as to the Will of God for us and for the world, as it is only by His inspiration that we can translate them into prayer.

I am not without hope that certain of the cruder and more superficial difficulties about prayer may have been solved in the minds of some readers by this consideration of its main features. There is, however, one objection, commonly made nowadays in the name of psychology, which we may notice here, though we can do no more than suggest the lines along which it may be met. It is often assumed that when psychology has discovered and described—as it is certainly within the legitimate province of psychology to do—the ways in which the mind works while at prayer; when it has analysed the motives of particular kinds of prayer, and pointed out that prayer, like every other activity, is the result of instincts and emotions and sentiments: that then it has “explained,” not to say exploded, prayer.

This onslaught is not really so terrible as it sounds. For, if and in so far as any psychologist attempts to “explain” prayer, he is going outside the limits of his science. The function of Science is to describe facts—in the case of psychology the facts of behaviour, and the mind behind behaviour; to say How things happen. Science does not and cannot “explain” any facts whatever, or say Why (in any ultimate sense) they happen. Psychology may unveil the processes, so to speak, of prayer, as it may unveil the processes and origins of belief in God or a future life. It may show us (as it does) that no further mental powers are involved in religious beliefs and practices than those employed in other human activities. But that is an entirely different thing from showing that there is no God or future

life to believe in, or that there is nothing *real* corresponding to the "God" with whom the soul is sure of being in contact when it prays. The *truth* and *origin* of a thing, in short, are two questions, not one; and we have not necessarily discovered anything about the former when we have discovered the latter. The processes of the praying soul are a matter for psychology: but psychology can pronounce no verdict whatever on the question, Is there anyone to pray to?

V

THE ART OF PRAYER

It cannot be emphasised too strongly that prayer, considered as "the ascent of the mind to God," is an end in itself—indeed, the supreme End of man. In the last chapter we were concerned with the theology and "science" of prayer, and we saw that its natural result is to further the accomplishment of the Will of God. It helps to get that Will done. But even this is not the *first* motive of prayer. Even if it did not help to achieve that end, we should still pray. The man who realised his divine sonship would still desire to come into his Father's presence, to speak to Him and to hear Him speak; just as a little child, with no understanding of his father's "will," runs to meet him, and is happy in his company, just because he *is* his father.

Still less, of course, is prayer a means of getting done the things we ourselves desire. The man who prays for what is to be got out of it is likely to get very little. It is unfortunate that the most hackneyed

and popular quotation about prayer should be Tennyson's line,

More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of.

Things are, indeed, wrought by prayer. But we do not pray for that reason. If nothing—nothing, I mean, recognisable and measurable—were wrought by prayer, Christian men and women would still continue to pray.

Now it is clear, surely, that if prayer is of such immeasurable importance, the practice of it demands—and deserves—all the care and attention that we can give to it. It is the sublimest art, and no art was ever acquired without some sweat of soul and body.

It is necessary to speak quite plainly about this. If our prayer-life is limited to "saying our prayers" twice daily—perhaps for two or three minutes only each time, and when in the nature of things we are either only half-awakened, or else (if we have done a decent day's work) so exhausted bodily and mentally that we ought to be more than half-way to sleep—we shall never, never learn to pray. This ought to be obvious; yet there are numbers of people who are really disappointed, and inclined to doubt the reality and value of prayer, who have never taken any particular pains to learn how to do it. Those, on the other hand, who paint its joys and ardours in the most glowing colours, are the ones, precisely, who have laboured long and earnestly at the work, and have experienced, in every instance, many disappointments and setbacks. Certain it is that none of the saints—none, that is, of the experts in this business of prayer—has ever suggested that it is easy and effortless except at the end of a long period of training, and seldom even then.

In this chapter, then, we shall try to set down some of the simplest and most elementary conditions and

preliminaries which all of us, who are honestly trying to make our prayers more like what God would have them to be, and what they might be, must keep always in the forefront of our minds.

The first of these conditions, beyond question, is this: we must make *time* for our prayers. I did not mean just now, of course, to decry the practice of saying our prayers first thing in the morning and last thing at night. It is a pious practice, hallowed by centuries of tradition, and all of us will naturally wish to commend ourselves to God just at those times. But how many people there are who, having—very often for excellent reasons—little time or capacity for prayer just at these times, nevertheless do not take the obvious step of choosing some other time! However busy we are, we can all of us take *some* time out of our leisure (however scanty) every day to devote to this supremely important work. Few people would deny this. What we have to do is to make prayer *a first call on our time*. This will involve real sacrifice, as well as careful planning. The daily life of one man may be so ordered and regular, his “times off” so certain and invariable, that he will be able to set aside the same period at the same time every day for prayer, or perhaps two such periods at different times. Another’s work, on the other hand, is of such a kind that he must plan his prayer-life from week to week, or even from day to day, making up his mind, before he goes to bed each night, what time on the morrow he will be able to devote to prayer. For a third man the problem is soluble more simply: he has only to get out of bed fifteen or twenty minutes earlier than he has been accustomed to. It is impossible to lay down any more definite general rule than this: we must each plan—in some cases replan—our lives so as to make time for prayer, no matter what else has to be sacrificed to it.

Some of us who have never, perhaps, really faced

up to this necessity before, will surely, if we are in earnest in the matter, find inspiration and encouragement in the example of Our Lord Himself. We are busy people : but He was the busiest Man that ever lived. It is impossible to read the gospels and not be sure of that. Yet He found time for prayer, *rising up* when necessary—and we may be sure that He did it on many occasions besides those on which the evangelists record it—*very early in the morning, a great while before day*, for the purpose. How mean and trivial—how ridiculous—do our excuses about not being able to find time for prayer sound when we think of Our Lord ! *His* days really *were* so fully occupied—with ministering to others' needs—that He had no leisure to pray : He in sober truth *was* so utterly at the beck and call of whomsoever demanded His attention, that He had no time to Himself—*no leisure so much as to eat*, still less to pray. And so, between days crammed with activity—journeys, preachings, healings, conversations—He would frequently spend the greater part of a whole night in prayer.

We are told that on these occasions Our Lord betook Himself *to a desert place*. This may remind us that, having found time for prayer, the next thing necessary is to be quiet. *Be still*. Perhaps there are some people who can pray in a room where a jazz band is performing, or outside the door of which a mob of children are playing, or with ear-phones on their heads. But most of us are not made like that ; and it is of primary importance that we should, while at prayer, be quiet and undisturbed. If this is possible in our own homes, well and good : let us thank God that He has cast our lines in pleasant places and made things easy for us. But for very many, in these days of over-crowding and house-shortage, it is utterly and permanently impossible to be sure of ten minutes' consecutive silence in the home ; and, when that is

so, the wise man will face the fact, and repair to a "desert"—that is, an undisturbed and uncrowded—place; it may be, like Christ Himself, to a hill or field, or some other natural retreat, or—more probably, if he lives in a town—to a quiet corner in the nearest church.

It is a mistake to think that one can plunge, as it were, headlong into communion with God straight from the thing one has just been doing. Some preparation is necessary, some shaking ourselves free from the ever-present world and flesh and devil, before we can enter into "that ampler ether, that diviner air" in which God is waiting to give us audience. And so, having chosen our time and our place, we have next to make the deliberate effort to *let go* of the outside world, to withdraw ourselves from it, to turn the eyes of our soul inwards, that we may the better turn them to God. I have used the words "deliberate effort" of this process: but it is that only, perhaps, in the simple acts of will which initiate it, and which are repeated from time to time in order to maintain it. But the end at which this relaxation aims is unlikely to be achieved precisely in proportion as we make it a business of strenuous effort and concentrated striving.¹

Let me anticipate here, and say that the object we have in view when we pray is to lay ourselves completely open to the "suggestions" of truth and goodness and beauty with which God is ever longing to fill our hearts and minds. Now, psychologists tell us that the mental condition in which suggestion—whether our own or another's—is most likely to be effective, is that in which we frequently find ourselves in the few moments immediately after waking from sleep; and, further, that this condition may be produced and stimulated at other times in various ways.

¹ The first rule of prayer and golf is the same! *Don't press.*

This state is characterised by three main features. In the first place, we are completely at rest, both in body and mind : our muscles are relaxed, and conscious thought is at a minimum ; there is a complete absence of effort, physical or mental. Secondly, though our minds are in this state of effortless passivity, they are not empty or inactive : on the contrary, a rapid, unceasing procession passes before us, of images, memories, impulses, desires, it may be the incidents of our dreams, wholly unconnected, uncontrolled, and incoherent. This aimless reverie does not, however, last for long. For, thirdly, we suddenly become, as we say, "wide awake." And what does that mean? If we analyse the matter carefully, we shall find, I think, that it means that some *one* image or idea—which may or may not have been among the previous medley, now completely gone—has come to occupy the centre of our minds, so that our attention is wholly focused on it, though (and this is the important point) still without any effort of our will. This third and final stage is, in fact, a condition of *effortless concentration*. It is sometimes very intense ; and it tends to endure.

These three states, or stages, of relaxation, reverie, and involuntary (though concentrated) attention may be, then, artificially induced, and psychologists advise us to cultivate them with a view to a sounder mental balance and better health in general. The reader may experiment for himself. Place yourself in a not uncomfortable (though not sleep-encouraging) position : close your eyes, and relax your muscles. Now let your thoughts wander, exercising no deliberate control over them whatever. You will find naturally that ideas and images of every sort—some of them, even, unwelcome ones, and such as would be refused entrance to your mind if you had not temporarily surrendered control over it—race across your brain. Your mind is now, paradoxical as it may

seem, in the ideal condition for accepting, retaining, and realising any single thought, idea, or suggestion that you may choose to present to it.

Before we go further, it should be pointed out that this third stage of effortless attention may be reached, after the preliminary relaxation, *via* another route than that of uncontrolled reverie. The alternative means is deliberately to concentrate the attention on something—a sound, such as the ticking of a clock, or an object, such as a candle-flame, or an idea (which will most naturally be one which summarises in a short and terse way the “suggestion” which it is proposed to make).

The practical question now arises : how to implant in the mind, acutely receptive as it now is, the idea which you wish to sow, in order that it may germinate and bring forth fruit later in your life and conduct. The chief part of the psychologist's answer to that question may be stated very shortly. That suggestion or idea is most likely to be accepted, acted upon, and realised by the deepest layers of the mind,¹ producing effects in the upper layers and in our daily life that we can recognise and estimate, which is made in the form of a short phrase repeated over and over again. M. Coué's famous slogan will come at once, of course, to the reader's mind : *Day by day, in every way I get better and better.*

Now let us go back to the point at which we left speaking about prayer. The relevance of this psychological digression is clear. We have seen that we must relax our minds and bodies, allowing the external world, so far as may be, to sink away, so that it, at any rate, shall not be a barrier between ourselves and God. The next step, then, is either (1) uncontrolled reverie, or (2) deliberate, concentrated attention upon some one thing—in this case, of course, on the thought of God Himself. We need not for the moment

¹ The “Unconscious.”

discuss these separately, since their *effect* is the same : the setting up—in the former case, as the result of the absence of any voluntary effort of thought ; in the latter, through the inevitable relaxation of interest produced by sheer fatigue—of that state of effortless attention which is the supreme opportunity for an effective suggestion.

The third stage, suggested by personal experience as well as by psychology, is that we should permeate our minds with the thought of God—His presence, His love, His will for us. And we may do this, quite frankly, by the rapid repetition of some formula embodying that thought ; such as, for example, any of the following (or a hundred others which the reader can devise for himself) : *Thou, O Lord, art with me and within me and about me.—O my God, Thou art here: I adore Thee.—Jesus, Jesus, be a Jesus to me now and always.—In Thee, O my God, is my peace.—Leave me not, O Lord, my God.—Thy Will be done in me, O Father, in my prayers and in my life.—God is Love, Light, Life.—My God, my God, look upon me.—My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready.—Show Thou me the way that I should walk in, for I lift up my soul unto Thee.*

If we adopt “attention” instead of “reverie” as our second stage—and we shall be wise to vary our method—the most natural thing will be to concentrate our minds on one of the many mental pictures of Our Blessed Lord with which we have stored our memories beforehand, any one of which can be summoned up to consciousness for use as required ; as, for example, *Christ on the Cross.—Christ blessing His apostles as He ascended into Heaven.—Christ blessing little children.—Christ looking with love on the rich young ruler.—Christ in the house of Lazarus and his sisters.—Christ praying.—Christ “in the way going up to Jerusalem.”—Christ preaching.—Christ at the Last Supper.* Then, when the effort of fixedly regarding the image thus conjured up has imperceptibly passed into the desired condition of

peaceful and *effortless* attention, we shall begin the repetition of one of the formulas already suggested, or one of our own making.

The reader will bear in mind that we are here concerned, not with particular forms or aspects of prayer—though something will be said about these matters in a moment—but with some helpful *preliminaries* to private prayer (other than ejaculatory prayers uttered as we go about our worldly business). I want to emphasise this. It follows from the very conception of prayer as primarily—whatever else and more it may be—the “ascent of the soul to God.” If that is so, then all prayer—whether of petition, or intercession, or thanksgiving—must start from the thought of God and, particularly, from as vivid and conscious a realisation as we can achieve of the presence of God—of the fact, seldom uppermost in the minds of most of us except at our times of prayer, that the eternal God is our Refuge, and that underneath are the Everlasting Arms. When this point has been reached, we can go on to particular kinds of prayer—but not till then : and if we have, say, ten minutes to spend in prayer, it will obviously be far better to spend seven or eight of them in reaching it, and the remaining two or three in particular petitions, supplications and thanksgivings, than to plunge at once into these without any serious attempt to realise the nearness of Him to whom we are speaking and the nature of the sublime transaction in which we are engaged.

Two things should be added. First : as we persevere with some such method as has been described, we shall find that the point of effortless attention, at which we can most profitably and easily fill our minds with the thought of God, comes more and more quickly. And secondly : lest anyone should object that there is no necessary reference to God at all in the stages of relaxation and reverie, it must be

pointed out that the spirit and intention with which we begin our ten minutes (or whatever it may be) colour and consecrate and give meaning to the whole period. And, after all, God knows the purpose which keeps us on our knees.

It has seemed better to devote this chapter to a discussion of these *prerequisites* of prayer than to any description of its various *aspects*. I wish, however, to end with a few (I fear rather random and discursive) remarks on one or two particular points.

And, first, a word about books of devotion. Let us not be so foolish as to despise these. Many of them are invaluable. They are useful in helping us to systematise our own prayers; and, when we find it difficult to find words in which to speak to God, they provide us with what we need. But the man who is really in earnest about prayer will not for long, I think, be content with any other book than the one he makes himself; adding to it, from time to time, such prayers or devotional extracts as he may come across elsewhere and may wish to incorporate into his own "treasury of devotion." The most convenient form for such a volume is perhaps an indexed loose-leafed note-book.

Such a note-book will naturally be used also for schemes of intercession, lists of people and things to be prayed for. If prayer is what these chapters have assumed it to be, intercession is incomparably the highest service that we can render to any human being. Let us, then, devote some part of our prayer-time every day to bringing the needs of others before God; not only those whom we know intimately and personally, but others—individuals, groups, societies, governments, classes, nations, races, whose life and work in the world will (if prayer is what we believe it to be) be affected by our prayers for them. And here I would urge that such intercessions as these need not be—indeed it is obvious that very often they

cannot be—very specific or detailed. We are too apt to decide in our own minds that So-and-so would be the better if he had a greater endowment of this quality or that, and then to ask God to give it to him. But in God's eyes it may be some other blessing that he most truly needs: and therefore it will often, surely, be a better (and a simpler) way of praying for him, just to bring *him*—not what we think about him, or even what we desire for him, but just the man himself—along with us into God's presence when we are there ourselves, and to ask Our Father quite simply to "bless" him, to do with him as He wills; knowing that the Will of God means perfect wholeness of body, mind, and spirit.

We shall find the greatest stimulus to this service of intercession in thanksgiving for the blessings God has showered upon ourselves and others. Indeed, it is the experience of all who have made any progress in the art of prayer, that when their inclination for intercession dwindles or their practice of it becomes half-hearted, the cause can almost always be traced to their having become half-hearted in thanksgiving. And so, at our prayer-time, intercession should always be preceded by thanksgiving—if not by detailed thanksgiving for each single spiritual or temporal blessing God has given us, at least by a general expression of gratitude for our continued life and health (or at any rate some measure of it, since we do still survive!), the love of dear ones, our opportunities of joy and happiness and service, "the means of Grace and the hope of glory." Then we shall long that others too may share these things: we shall have our minds attuned for intercession.

The question of the words in which to clothe their thanksgivings and intercessions is a real difficulty to many. It need not be so, I think, if the idea of "special intention" were more familiar than it is. Any form of prayer hallowed by long usage in the

services of the Church and the private devotions of holy souls may be used with such "intention"; as summing up, that is to say, our thoughts and desires (which we find it difficult to put into satisfying words of our own) in regard to the subject of our prayer. For example : suppose I am interceding for a rather long list of people, of varying characters, circumstances, needs. I may hold each of these in my mind for a moment or two, bringing him with me into God's presence, calling his personal appearance (if I know it) and the circumstances of his life before me ; then, when I have done this with each of the people in the list, I may say, slowly and thoughtfully, the *Our Father* for them altogether, as the ideal expression of my own prayer for them. Other forms may, of course, be used in a similar way ; as, for example, the *Glory be*, the *Te Deum*, or the first few verses of Psalm 103, to summarise (after we have dwelt on them for a short time in thought) our thanksgivings.

The mention of intercession and thanksgiving may remind us that the life of prayer is not merely an individual affair, and not liveable or practicable in isolation. It is to Our Father that I come in prayer, as a member of His family. I am not His only child, though the whole of His love is available for me, as for each other member of the family. It is impossible to approach God as Father and at the same time to forget our brethren : we cannot think of Him without remembering them. And we should remember them, not only in intercession, but by reflecting that our prayers are only a part of the great volume of prayer continually ascending to God from all His children. The prayer-life of the family is like a great orchestra. We are playing our own part in it, and without that the harmony of the whole would be marred and weakened. But our part by itself would be a poor thing : it is completed and perfected and given its true value only by virtue of its union with the rest.

It is in the Holy Communion, the crown and climax of every kind of prayer, that we see most clearly its essentially corporate and social character. For in Holy Communion we receive the life of Christ Himself, the life, that is, which realises itself in being spent in service and sacrifice. "Everyone," Scott Holland once wrote, "who kneels at the altar of God to receive the blessed Food is brought inside a life of passion and enthusiasm and suffering and glory, of which the expression can only be found in a Body broken, in a Blood poured out." It has been inevitable, in view of our special purpose in this chapter, to write almost as one might have written if prayer were merely the individual concern of each separate soul with God. But no one is likely to make that mistake, or to think of "the ascent of the soul to God" as simply a matter of "my prayers" or "my Communions," who has even begun to grasp the implications of the first two words of the Lord's prayer, or to realise that the table of the Lord is by His ordinance the meeting-place, not only of man with God, but of man with his fellows.

VI

SIN

THE sensible man of to-day, someone has said, is not worrying about his sins. Perhaps no one ever said anything less sensible. For it is precisely about their sins—though they may not always use the word—that men *are* worried. If it were possible to take a canvass of the whole human race at this (or any other) moment, we should find one conviction com-

mon to all men, no matter how varied their circumstances, manner of life, ideals and standards of belief and conduct; the conviction, namely, that there is something wrong with them, some flaw in their very being which hinders and hampers their adjustment to life, some acute disharmony which prevents them from achieving what they know to be the full possibilities of their nature.

That is the "sense of sin" in its widest and most general aspect: and it is as universal as humanity. But in the Christian, it is more definite and explicit. This is true even of the "nominal" Christian, living in a country whose laws, customs and conventions do at any rate bear some relation to the Christian standard, though they fall far short of it. The average Englishman, when he does wrong, knows that he is doing wrong, and suffers some qualms of conscience, stifle them though he may.

The sense of sin becomes more acute and explicit still in the man who is really trying to live the Christian life: and the harder he tries the more acute it becomes; the further he travels on the way to conformity with the character of Christ, the more clearly does he realise how infinitely further he has yet to go. And the man who is making serious efforts to live the life of Prayer—the life for which he was born, of frank and confident fellowship with God—finds himself confronted again and again with that in his own life which seems to make the very possibility of the continuance of this fellowship a mockery and a delusion. For the first effect of the beginnings of intimacy with God is always the same: it is that which St. Peter felt when he cried, *Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord*, and which impelled the centurion, when he found himself face to face with Jesus, to say, *Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst come under my roof*.

Let us try to analyse this conviction a little deeper.

It is more than the self-accusation of having broken what we know to be God's laws, more than the sense of having "left undone those things which we ought to have done, and done those things which we ought not to have done." It is, rather, the consciousness of utter inability to become—and even to *want* to become—other than we are. We sin, and shall sin again when the temptation offers, because we like it, and for no other reason. At the most, though in our better moments we do desire to be good, we only half-desire it. We are like St. Augustine, when he prayed, "Give me chastity—but not yet!" In other words, the real problem is that *our will is divided*, and that of ourselves we are impotent—since our "will" is we ourselves, the sum total of our personality—to bring it into unity and harmony with the will of God.

That, stated as shortly as possible, is the problem. And there is only one solution of it. So St. Paul saw. *Who will deliver me from the body of this death? I thank my God through Jesus Christ our Lord.* The only solution lies in "the expulsive power of a new affection," in such intimate union and fellowship with Our Lord that sin inevitably loses its attractiveness—for what fellowship has light with darkness?—and therefore its power. That is what we mean, surely, when we speak of Christ as our Saviour; we mean that He "saves" us from the guilt, but still more from the *power* of sin. For its power is its real horror. In a previous chapter we emphasised the fact that even our sin does not alter God's love for us, nor blind His eyes to what He means us to be and what we may still become. But it blinds *us*—to the truth about ourselves, and to the truth about God.

But, then, the question arises: How are we to feel the attractiveness of Christ, how put ourselves in the way of his friendship? Well, some part of the answer to that question is to be found, I hope, in Chapters III. and V. of this book. But something

may be added to what has been said in those chapters.

It is only a new "affection" which possesses "expulsive power." Sin will never loose its hold on us until we love—or at least begin to love—Jesus. And we shall never do that until we have understood something of His love for us: that is, until we have learnt what the Cross means.

I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me. The death of Christ is a fact in past history: but it is much more than that. It is the revelation, given at a particular time and place, of eternal truth, and, in particular, of God's love, and of the effect of man's sin. Just for a few hours in the history of the world a veil was lifted, and a few people were allowed to see with their bodily eyes the effect of sin: and they saw—Jesus crucified. But that is *always* the effect of sin; the crucifixion of infinite Love: and if from the eyes of our soul the veil could be lifted, and we could see the effect and consequence of our sins, that is what we should see. We cannot, indeed, crucify Our Lord's body again: but we can, and we do, wound His sacred Heart. St. Paul speaks of sin as *crucifying afresh the Lord of glory*: he means that every evil thought we encourage, every unlovely thing we do or say, is like a new nail driven into the hands and feet of Jesus, or a fresh spear thrust into His side. That, for a Christian, is the true dreadfulness of sin. It is like (but how much worse!) striking one's mother in the face. And remember: in Jesus we see God Himself. The Cross is the revelation of God's love. God so loved—and *loves*—the world, which treats Him so. That is how Our Father meets our blows, our rebellion, our ingratitude, our treachery. To such lengths will He go to draw us to Himself, to make it possible for His own perfect holiness to forgive us, and to win us from the domination of sin.

That, then, is the revelation which we must contemplate, on which over and over again we must allow our minds and imaginations to dwell, if we are to be drawn to the side of Christ. There is no other way. (We see once more the supreme importance of the gospel story.) But this way, in the end, is certain. For no man can go on for ever resisting such an appeal as this.

Thou must love Me, Who have died for thee !

No doubt our response to the appeal of God's love is slow and imperfect, perhaps because that love is so unimaginably greater than anything we could, without it, have conceived possible. But all hope of spiritual progress lies here. Once again we are reminded that religion does not consist so much in anything we do or can do, as in our apprehension, however halting and gradual, of what God has done and is doing for us.

And in the meantime, till our understanding is perfect and sin ceases, in consequence, to have any attraction for us, we may use, in our continuous struggle against its beguiling force, all the information we possess or can acquire as to our own nature, the reasons why sin draws us so irresistibly, and the manner in which the human mind works : we may, in short, apply our psychological knowledge to the task before us.

The first and last secret of success here is that all dealing with sin should be positive and not negative. We have seen in a former chapter that all human activity—mental, spiritual, physical—is the result of the energy attaching to the great primary instincts and the emotional tone connected with each of them ; that from the impact of experience and instinct sentiments are formed ; and that a man's character is determined by the nature of his sentiments, and especially by the combination of his master-sentiment with his sentiment of self-regard.

It follows, then, that every sin is based ultimately upon one or other of the instincts, and that the energy and driving-force behind the sin is instinctive energy. It is seldom much use, therefore, attempting to deal with sin by itself, in its final form. The first and most essential step is to discover the instinct from which it springs. For example: the sins of slander, gossip, "nosey-parkerism," censoriousness, neglecting one's own business in order to criticise and interfere in other people's—these are all traceable to the instinct of curiosity. Or, again: impure imaginations, lustful reveries, sexual indulgence alone or with others, are clearly misdirections, exaggerations, or perversions of the instinct of sex.

Now, there are two facts about instinctive energy which it is of vital importance to remember. In the first place, it is (like other forms of "energy") indestructible: it has got to be used, and if it is not used in one way it will, so to speak, use itself in another. Thus, it may find an outlet as sin because it has no other: or it may bottle itself up and stew in its own juice in the deepest and most unreachable recesses of the mind (the Unconscious), in which case it may one day explode and do irreparable damage. Secondly, not all the energy belonging to an instinct is required for the direct and "natural" expression of that instinct itself. A great deal of it may be used for other purposes and directed into other channels. The most instructive instance here is that of sex, partly because in nine out of ten cases it is the strongest instinct, and is therefore the cause of so much spiritual failure and disaster, and partly because its complexity makes its redirection into other channels easy to illustrate. The normal sex-impulse includes at least three factors: a creative element, a self-assertive element, and a protective (maternal, paternal) element. Its redirection (the technical, psychological name for which is *sublimation*) into

non-sexual channels may be seen in the artist, the actor, and the nurse, and of course in many others.

Having, then, traced the sin to its foundation, the next step is to provide other, non-sinful channels for the instinctive energy belonging to it. Thus curiosity, misused and perverted in gossip and slander, is also the basis of scientific research and the pursuit of knowledge; the acquisitiveness at the root of theft is also the starting-point of the collector's hobby: the sexual impulse may be utilised in leadership, service, and every kind of work that involves action and initiative.

It should be added that this process of sublimation goes on, once it has been started, secretly and unobserved. We cannot watch it at work. Like all mental processes, it is chiefly determined by environment. Our business is to put ourselves, so far as we can, in the *conditions* under which the energy of the particular instinct we wish to sublimate may find healthy, social, useful channels along which to flow. It is this consideration which gives such importance to the necessity of avoiding occasions and opportunities of sin. When a man whose temptation is impurity continues to cultivate bad company, he is making sublimation impossible: so is a drunkard who frequents the public-house, or a sluggard who does not make a point of sitting on hard chairs!

It is evident that for most of us this work of sublimation will be easier if we can rely upon the assistance of a wise spiritual adviser. It is the conventional English view that the ordinary Christian is entirely competent to reach such spiritual perfection as is in him to achieve without any such direction or advice. It has been well said that—

“There are few points on which English Christianity is more fatally at variance with the spirit, not merely of the greatest saints, but of the New Testament itself. Timothy and Titus

were men of rare spiritual gifts, but St. Paul thought it necessary to direct them, not merely as to the details of their office, but as to the regulation of their own characters. The universal testimony of the saints is that the Christian soul cannot pursue its journey successfully without the help of a director."¹

No discussion of the Sacrament of Penance is possible here. But a word may be said on the psychological advantages of private confession. We have been urging the desirability of a positive treatment of sin. What too often happens is that the sinner is content (generally through ignorance of the possible danger of this method) merely to repress his sin, to drive it out of sight and out of mind. But, though we can indeed drive it out of sight, it cannot be driven out of mind. It may be driven out of that part of the mind which we call "consciousness," the part that we are *aware* of and aware with: but the mind is a bigger thing than consciousness, and it by no means follows that because an experience, or an idea, or a sin, has been thus banished and "forgotten," it has therefore ceased to exist, or to influence our life and conduct. As a matter of fact, the exact opposite is more likely to happen. An idea or memory thus driven down to the Unconscious (as psychologists call this region of the mind), because of its unpleasant associations, or its manifest incompatibility with our ideals, does *not* necessarily cease to influence us: all that ceases is our awareness or recognition of its influence. And the world is full of people whose depression and irritability and bad temper and evil habits and inexplicable "nerves"—and things worse than these at their worst—are the unrecognised expressions of "repressed" memories and forgotten lapses into sin.

K. E. Kirk, *Some Principles of Moral Theology*, p. 134.

The only safe way of dealing with such lapses is to face them open-eyed, to recognise them for what they are, to discover the mental factors of which they are composed ; above all, to find their instinctive basis and to provide new channels for its sublimation. That is the positive, hopeful method. The other, negative, dangerously uncertain method is to sit on the safety-valve.

If all this is true—and no psychologist would dispute it—then, clearly, there may be great value in the practice of confession to a priest who has made (as an increasing number of priests are making) a study of psychology and the workings of the mind. The sinner's difficulty is that he is, in the nature of things, very often incapable of a calm, judicial, unprejudiced facing of the situation himself. Hence the value, then, of confession and competent "direction." It has many values: I am here concerned with only one. It enormously decreases the possibility of "repression" and its consequent dangers.

There is a complementary truth to all this, which will help us to keep a sense of proportion and balance. There is often some danger in concentrating too much attention on one particular sin, so that it becomes—in its horror and its hold over us—a real obsession in our minds. To dwell exclusively on any one sin is the surest way of strengthening, not of weakening, its grip. It is to surrender ourselves to fear—perhaps the most deadly of the spiritual foes we have to face: in psychological language, to encourage the unconscious "counter-suggestion" that this particular sin has taken such hold upon us that we shall never be able to overcome it, and that when next the temptation to it occurs we shall, in spite of our prayers and good intentions now, be helpless to resist.

But it is useless to tell ourselves "not to worry." The true method, as always, is positive. We must

reflect that our judgment is not necessarily God's, and that Christian holiness consists, not in the mere avoidance of one besetting sin, but in the advance in *all* virtues and graces : and we must concentrate our efforts, less on the avoidance of the sin than on the achievement of the virtue which is its opposite. The proud man will study to acquire humility (largely a matter of enduring humiliation cheerfully): the slothful man, to discover ways of making work attractive to him : the angry man, to find something worth being angry about—and so on.

And so we come back once more to the most positive of all positive ways of dealing with sin—the cultivation of the fellowship of our Blessed Lord through prayer and sacrament. Character develops through hcontact with Christ.

Reference has been made more than once to the importance of filling our minds with encouraging, confident, hopeful thoughts about ourselves and our capacities—of thinking, in short, God's thoughts about us rather than our own. An obvious parallel suggests itself between the much-advertised and now common practice of auto-suggestion, and what may be called *Christo-suggestion*. If *Day by day, in every way, I get better and better* can accomplish even a tenth of what is claimed for it, what limits can we set to the power of an auto-suggestion based on the truth of Christ's indwelling in our souls, the certainty of His will for our spiritual progress, and the assurance of His Spirit's guidance ; such "Christo-suggestions" as *Day by day Jesus makes me more like Himself—Christ in me, the hope of glory—It is no longer I that live, but Christ that liveth in me—I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me—Jesus will keep me from falling—He will preserve me from all evil?*

But a warning is needed here. It is the experience of psychologists that auto-suggestion is most effective when preceded by some degree of self-analysis, some

attempt to *know oneself* and one's character and needs, and that in some cases auto-suggestion may do actual harm unless a thorough *psycho-analysis* under expert guidance has taken place first ; since it is dangerous to treat symptoms apart from their causes. Similarly, we shall employ "Christo-suggestion" in conjunction with, and never as a substitute for, regular self-examination—and, if necessary, confession to a priest.

VII

MEANS OF GRACE

IN a former chapter it was pointed out that religion is the interaction of Grace and faith ; that a Christian's interior life may be regarded as the response of faith to the proffered Grace of God. We have now to turn our attention to one of the ways—not the only way—in which the Father thus puts within our reach the supernatural life without which we cannot fulfil the end and purpose of human life.

We need not devote much space to a defence of the broad principle which underlies the sacramental system of the Catholic Church : but two points may be briefly noticed. In the first place, the fact of the Incarnation has forever set the seal of God's approval on the use of material things as channels or vehicles of spiritual blessings : *the Word became flesh*. Nor are there lacking, in the story of Our Lord's life on earth, instances of His own use of material means for spiritual purposes : several of the miracles of healing and—supremely—the institution of the Eucharist will occur to the reader.

Secondly ; if we reflect, we can see how natural and fitting it is, how exactly it corresponds with what we might expect, that God should appoint these things called "sacraments" as a method of bestowing grace on beings who are, essentially, sacraments themselves. For every man is, precisely, two things most intimately and inevitably (in the conditions of earthly existence) combined : he is "an outward and visible sign"—that is his body—"of an inward and spiritual grace"—that is his soul or mind or *ego*. And the function of the former is to act as the latter's organ or instrument—in one word, to express or to *convey* it. We can, indeed, only know each other, or influence each other, or hold intercourse of any kind with each other, by means of our bodies. It is my "ego"—the real and essential and spiritual "I"—which loves, is angry, pleased, bored, and so on. But the only way in which anyone else can tell that I am any of these things is by the way "I" use my body—the "outward and visible sign" through which alone the "inward and spiritual" part of me can express itself. "I" who write this book am in truly spiritual contact with "you" who read it : but we only achieve this contact by material means—by the use of our physical organs *plus* paper with certain meaningful marks on it. And if we were face to face in conversation it would be the same : the inward and spiritual "we" could only communicate through our eyes and ears and vocal chords and facial expressions.

All this is so obvious that it seems merely beating the air to emphasise it. And indeed few people nowadays are inclined to quarrel with the sacramental principle stated in this way.

Not otherwise is the relation of the two "parts" in a sacrament. In every sacrament there is a "body"—the outward and visible (or audible, or tangible) part—and a "soul." And the soul of any sacrament

is always God Himself, acting and working and expressing some particular purpose or design for our good through a material instrument chosen by Himself. It is often pointed out nowadays how great is the value of the sacraments, from a psychological point of view, as "aids to faith." Here let us insist that they are more than this: they are "means of Grace." Not that in any sacrament faith is unnecessary: on the contrary, its co-operation with Grace is always indispensable, since Grace without faith can achieve no more than faith could achieve if there were no Grace to meet its Godward venture. But in any sacrament *God* is truly at work, really doing, acting, willing, giving. Our faith does not create, it only receives and appropriates a gift which is *there* whether we will to receive and appropriate it or not. Thus, in Holy Baptism the faith of the Church and of the sponsors (or, in the case of an adult, of the person to be baptised) accepts, but does not create, the possibility of supernatural union with God: in Penance the contrition of the penitent does not generate, as it were out of its own depth, the Divine forgiveness: in the Eucharist the Body and Blood of Christ are "verily and indeed taken and received" independently of the disposition of the communicant, though his disposition will determine whether the Gift is received to his soul's health and welfare or the reverse. The sacraments, in a word, as the Catechism teaches, are not only "pledges" or symbols to remind us of God's good gifts to us, but are also "means whereby we receive" those gifts.

If the sacraments are God's gifts, it is plainly man's duty to accept them. But they must be accepted for what they are, and used for the purposes for which God gives them. This means, first, that we cannot derive from any sacrament the full spiritual blessing which God wills to bestow thereby, unless we understand what sort of blessing it is; and, further, that if,

knowing the purpose of a sacrament, we wilfully put it to other or lesser ends, we may not only fail to achieve those ends, but we may forfeit the blessing which God has attached to it.

While each sacrament has its own special purpose and use, the general end and object of all sacraments is the same—namely, to unite men to God and to one another in a fellowship of love. They have, that is to say, a twofold purpose for the individual who uses them ; one relating to God, and one relating to his fellows. In other words, the character of sacraments is essentially *social* ; they are intended for corporate use. This is evident from the nature of the symbolism employed : thus, Baptism is plainly a rite of initiation into a society, while the Eucharist is meaningless unless it is (in whatever sense) a meal partaken of in common with others. To baptise a baby without any guarantee that he will be brought up in a Christian atmosphere and helped in his spiritual growth by contact with other members of the Church, or to baptise an individual pagan and send him straight back to pagan society and pagan influences, would be fraught with danger. And for two reasons : first, because it would be to treat the sacrament of Baptism as a kind of magic, instead of a spiritual bond uniting God and man, and therefore involving man's co-operation ; and secondly, because such a proceeding would ignore the truth that Baptism bestows the possibility of living a supernatural life on the person baptised, *not* as an isolated unit, but as a member henceforth of the divine Society which is endowed with that life. Or, to state these two reasons as one : the sacrament of Baptism requires the individual's co-operation, which he cannot give apart from his union with the rest of the baptised.

This important truth may be illustrated even more clearly in the case of the Eucharist. The

faith by which we appropriate the divine Life which is given to us in Holy Communion is twofold in character: it includes an element which may be described as the exercise of spiritual vision, and an element of co-operation which must continue after actual reception of the sacrament. Let us consider these two elements further.

There is a story that faith was once defined as "the power of believing what on other grounds you know to be untrue": and there are undoubtedly many people who think of it almost in that way, to whom faith and reason are opposites. But of course they are not. In the New Testament faith is contrasted, not with reason, but with sight; and is pictured (at any rate in one of its aspects) as the God-given power of recognising, and living in the light of, the unseen, super-natural, eternal world which transcends (though it does not annihilate) the world of touch and sight and taste. All men have this power; but, like the power of natural sight, it can only function and grow by being exercised; and if it is not exercised, it becomes atrophied and degenerate. Shut a man up with bandaged eyes in a cellar for a long time, and when he is brought into the daylight again his sight may have been damaged beyond repair, or even totally destroyed, by his long inability to use it. So it is, by the operation of an unescapable law, with spiritual vision. The Bible is full of illustrations of this law. The author of Exodus, for example, recognises it, and rightly describes its effects as the work of God, when he says that *God hardened Pharaoh's heart*: but he might with equal truth have said that Pharaoh hardened his own heart by long-continued refusal to hear God's voice. People who have suddenly resumed their religious duties again after years of neglect sometimes wonder that their Communion mean so little to them, that they have so little sense of Our Lord's presence, that they find the attention

and concentration which prayer demands so difficult. They have to be reminded that this is not surprising: they have damaged—it is only by the mercy of God that they have not destroyed—their spiritual vision, by living for years as if they were spiritually blind: their faith is affected, and will only gradually return.

Faith, then, lives through use. But there is the further point, that faith must follow as well as precede the Grace of God. How is it that there are so many pious people, regular and frequent in their reception of the Blessed Sacrament, who seem to have little real influence on others, and even to show so little effort to pull their own weight in the corporate life of the Church or their own section of society? The reason is clear. Such people are ignoring—or suppressing, consciously or not—the *social* character of Holy Communion. But in regarding the Blessed Sacrament as simply “*my communion*” with Jesus, a means only to their own sanctity and holiness, they are missing its full meaning and purpose. To treat it thus as a private, individual affair is to degrade it.

In the first three centuries of the Christian era the Church had to fight her way against various pagan religions, in all of which sacraments of initiation and redemption held a prominent place. But the greatest difference between Christianity and these Mystery Religions, as they are called—the factor which more than any other contributed to the Church’s ultimate triumph—was, precisely, that whereas the sacraments of the Mysteries were strictly private and individual things, promising spiritual blessings to each worshipper by himself, the Eucharist was a bond between the worshippers as well as between each of them and his Lord. It is to be feared that there are many Christian communicants to whom the Blessed Sacrament is little more than a “mystery” not unlike those which,

as a matter of history, it displaced. Such people are trying to be Christians by themselves. And you cannot be a Christian, or a communicant, by yourself—any more than you can play cricket by yourself, or do any of the things which by their nature involve relationships with other people.

It follows from this pagan view of the Eucharist that not only is the "preliminary" faith of such people gravely deficient, and the full grace of the Sacrament consequently withheld from them, but that they are almost entirely lacking in what I have called "following" faith. They cannot *stir up the Gift of God that is within* them because they do not realise—or they have wilfully misinterpreted—what that gift is.

The communicant, on the other hand, who understands that the Blessed Sacrament is given to him, not merely for the deepening of his own individual intercourse with Our Lord, but in order that he may broadcast, as it were, the grace and power which he has received in his Communion, can never be content to hug that power to himself. On the contrary, he will seize every opportunity of manifesting to the world he lives in the character of the Lord he has met at the altar. This is only another way of saying, as has been said more than once before, that fellowship with men must follow from any real fellowship with God and any true understanding of His character. If after our Communion we shrink from contact with our fellows, and seek to nurse in secret the peace and joy that have come to us, it is with a self-made idol of our own imaginations that we have been in contact, and not with Jesus—not with the divine Lover whose all-embracing sacrificial death is renewed in every Eucharist. Here, as St. John knew, is the only sure test of the reality of any of our devotions. *We know that we have passed from death unto life*—we know, that is, that we are in contact with Christ, that we

are living the supernatural life of fellowship with our Father: how do we know it?—*because we love the brethren.*

VIII

THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND THE CHURCH

JESUS came into Galilee, preaching the Gospel of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand.

The first three gospels agree in telling us that our Lord's ministry began with this proclamation; not about His Father, or about Himself, but about the "Kingdom."

Many learned books have been written to show what meaning this phrase "Kingdom of God" would have conveyed to the Jews who, familiar with it already from their own sacred literature, heard it from Our Lord's lips, and what He meant by it Himself. We need not concern ourselves with the former of these questions: it is enough to be certain that Our Lord, when He used the expression, intended His hearers to think, not of a kingdom in any material or geographical sense, but of the Rule, or Reign, or Sovereignty of God in the hearts and lives of men. This Reign of God, as our Lord's subsequent teaching made clear, is connected with, and dependent on, man's devotion to Himself, and it will be fully realised when, and only when, the whole human race has accepted Him as Saviour and Master. This consummation, therefore, is the final end we have in mind when we pray, in the words Christ Himself has taught us, *Thy Kingdom come*: but, since this end is

(so far as we can see) a long way off, and will be the climax of a long process, we are praying also, when we use this petition, for its *progressive* realisation. Commentators on the gospels, when they are discussing the Kingdom, always remind us that it is, as Christ Himself said, both present and future, at once *at hand* and to be longed for and looked for in time to come. The Kingdom is *not yet*, that is to say, since the conversion of human society to our Lord is not yet complete; but it is *at hand* and *among us* wherever groups of people, large or small, are regulating their lives according to the Rule of God.

Our Lord bids us to pray that God's Rule may be obeyed *on earth*; and that it may be so obeyed is the divine Plan or Purpose for the world. In former chapters of this book we have urged that the "end" of human life is personal fellowship with God. But it can never be said too often that God treats us, not as individuals, but as members of a family. There is no "end" for me apart from God's other children. There can never be any exclusive communion, so to speak, just between myself and God alone. The Eucharist, as we have seen, represents the climax of prayer and worship, the meeting-place between earth and heaven: but there can be no Celebration without at least one other person present beside the priest; the service derives its whole meaning from the fact that it is the congregation's participation in the unceasing offering of prayer and worship by the whole Church; and when, in that service, we present our adoration before the throne of God, it is "with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven" that we do so.

God's Plan, then, for the individual, and His Plan for society, are not two Plans, but one: neither can be accomplished without the other. It follows that no Christian can be indifferent to the extension of the Kingdom of God upon earth, with whatever

earnestness and devotion he is striving to perfect his own communion with the Father.

. . . *up to the Throne*
He travels the fastest who travels alone

is not true. Towards the Throne of God a man cannot travel a yard, fast or slow, alone.

The Bible is the story of the gradual disclosure of this Plan for the world, and from first to last it includes the ideal of a society of men and women freely co-operating with God in the accomplishment of His Plan. This is apparent if we think of the divine choice of the Jewish nation; of the prophets' emphasis on the world-wide destiny which God had meant Israel to fulfil, and which, by her own sin, she forfeited; of the Old Testament conceptions of the holy Remnant and the redeemed Israel; of the transformation, after the Exile, of the nation into a Church; of Our Lord's choice and training of the Twelve, His institution of Sacraments, His teaching about the Vine, and His prayer (in St. John xvii.) for the unity of His followers; finally, of the New Testament conception of the function of the Church.

The Church and the Kingdom are not simply convertible terms. The Church is the *instrument* by means of which the growth of the Kingdom is increased and its final "coming" brought near. And by the Church we mean, of course, the whole company of the baptised: the Church Triumphant, of saints and angels already enjoying the beatific vision of God's unclouded presence; the Church Expectant, of souls in Paradise; and the Church "Militant here in earth." All three divisions of the Church are playing their part in the extension of the Kingdom: the Church Triumphant by the ministry of angels and the intercessions of saints; the Church Expectant by the prayers of the faithful departed and their progressive apprehension of God's will.

But here we must confine our attention to the Church Militant. Let us consider for a moment the New Testament conception of it as this is presented to us in the writings of St. Paul, remembering that in his mind the Church in its fulness included the saints and the blessed dead as well as those still on earth.

St. Paul uses many metaphors and images to express the purpose which God has created the Church to fulfil; none of them is more illuminating than that of the Head, the Body, and the limbs. The Church is the Body of Christ: that is to say, it exists to be the instrument whereby He, the Head, may accomplish His purpose in and for the world. Its relation to Him is similar to the relation of our bodies to our heads. If I say, "I will walk to London," that is an idea, an intention, a purpose originating in my head—my brain. But my head cannot do the walking: for that the co-operation of my body is necessary. If my legs are crippled or diseased, I may will and desire to walk to London till I am black in the face, but I shan't get there; just so far as the strength of my legs is impaired by any cause whatever—for example, by a weakness in some quite different part of my body, which nevertheless affects my legs, because they and it are part of the same body—just so far will the accomplishment of my purpose to walk to London be hampered and delayed.

So is it with the will of Christ and its accomplishment. What is that will for the world? It is that all men should be "saved"—saved from the hell of futility and perversion and sin which separation from Him involves; that every member of the human race shall come to love Him as Saviour and serve Him as Lord. That is His purpose. But it can only be achieved through His Body, the Church: without the Church's co-operation it must go undone, since the Church is the only Body Christ has on earth, and we, its members, His only limbs.

This thought of the Church as the Body of Christ is tremendous in its implications. *If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it*: think what that means, for example. It means that every time you or I lose our temper, or think or act in a way unworthy of *the vocation wherewith we are called*, the healthy functioning of the whole Body is impaired; the will of Christ, it may be, in India or China is thwarted; the salvation of the world is held up by us. Or think, again, how important it is that each one of us should be discharging, in the life of the whole Body, the function which God has assigned to us, and not a function which belongs to someone else. We are all "limbs" or "members": but *all members have not the same office*. What if we are trying to be legs when we are meant to be arms, or arms when we ought to be legs? In other words, are we quite sure that the work we are doing in the world is being done because God has called us to it? When people use the word "vocation," they are nearly always thinking of either parsons or nuns! But, of course, God "calls" men and women to every kind of work which may rightfully be done at all. In a truly Christian order of society people would really believe this: it would be realised that the vocation to be a wife, or a gardener, or a banker, or a dustman, or a cook, may be as truly divine as the vocation to the sacred ministry. And if once the idea that a priest's is the only real "vocation" were done away with, the dignity of *all* work would be understood, and many men and women would do their work in the world with a greater sense of contentment and responsibility than now.

It is important, in this connection, that when we speak of God "calling" us to any particular work, we should not think only of voices and visions and the like. God does not call many in that way. But if we are, and show Him that we are, really ready and willing to do whatever He wants us to do, and to go

wherever He sends us, experience shows that He does make known His will to us. But we must be willing to abide by it, and we must use our common sense.¹

The Church, then, exists to accomplish on earth the will of her Lord. Clearly, the chief ways in which she will exercise this function must be by manifesting in the life of her members the character of Christ, and so attracting the world to Him; and, secondly, by persuading the world that its problems and perplexities are only soluble by His Spirit. The individual Christian's share in the first of these tasks is to let his secret life of communion with God so shine through and illuminate his dealings with his fellows that men may say, If that is Christianity, I like it: the more of it the better; I wish I were a Christian myself. The second task is one for the whole Church: plainly, no isolated individual can undertake it. The individual's part here is to use his intelligence and imagination to see how and where the principles of the Gospel touch and illumine the problems of the world; to use whatever influence he has—by means of the vote, for example, in Parliamentary and municipal elections—to bring Christian principles to bear on those problems; and to take what personal share he can in the Church's work of transforming the kingdoms of this world into the Kingdom of Our Lord and of His Christ.

For the Church must work for the coming of the Kingdom as well as pray for it. There have been long periods in her history when this was forgotten, and when the sanctification of her own members was regarded as the sole business of the Church. There are still many people who take this view, even inside the Church: the most brilliant and widely read among

¹ *E.g.*, by recognising that God's call may come through family tradition, or personal gifts and capacities, or the prospects of a career, or the advice of friends or employers, or the wishes of parents.

living ecclesiastical writers seems to share it, and his books and newspaper-articles appear to teach that it is no part of the Church's duty to concern herself overmuch with redressing human wrongs or trying to influence "secular" affairs. Nevertheless, this attitude is becoming more and more rare, and we may hope that soon it will be universally recognised as really unchristian.

There is no more remarkable sign of our times than the rapid growth of a "social consciousness" in the Church during recent years; the recognition, that is to say, that the Gospel is a message for the whole man and for all men, and not merely for the "souls" of a few; and that if that Gospel is true it must contain the key to all the problems and perplexities of human society. During the great Coal Strike of 1926 a number of Bishops and others, believing that no settlement could be lasting which was not based upon the fundamental Christian principles of freedom, fellowship and justice, took it upon themselves to say so, publicly and emphatically, and to use their influence to procure a settlement of that kind. (They failed: but that is not the important point here.) Their action was furiously denounced by people who thought that religion has nothing to do with ordinary, everyday matters like the relations between masters and men, or the material conditions under which people live, but it was approved by thousands of Englishmen who rejoiced to see the Church putting her principles into practice in the face of obloquy and misrepresentation.

The action of these leaders was symbolic of the immense change which has come over the Church in such matters since the mid-Victorian era. We are sometimes tempted, perhaps, to lament that the voice of the Church in social and economic questions is so inarticulate and so little heeded. A certain cure for such despondency is to read the history of England

during the first half of the nineteenth century. "On the fifty years that laid the foundations of modern England, the influence of the Church as a witness to social righteousness was, it is hardly an exaggeration to say, almost negligible."¹

No such verdict will be passed, by the future historian, on our own day. It would be impossible in the space at our disposal here even to summarise the evidence that we are living to-day in the midst of a great movement, inspired by the Spirit of God, and characterised by the determination to apply the Christian ethic to all departments of human life. But let us reflect how unthinkable, less than fifty years ago, would have been such things as C.O.P.E.C. or the Industrial Christian Fellowship!

We may pray, then, with great confidence for the increasing growth of an enlightened and intelligent Christian Conscience, that the Mind of Christ—which is the will of God, His Plan for the world—may be more and more deeply explored and interpreted. Clearly, as we have already noticed, this work of discovery and interpretation is one for the whole Church. The duty of the individual Christian will vary according to his capacities and opportunities. There is work for the Biblical scholar, and for the man with expert knowledge of the particular problems—racial, international, economic—of our day. For many people there are opportunities of study—and especially of group study, since it is in the atmosphere of fellowship and a corporate search for truth that we may expect the will of God to be most perfectly revealed; and of bearing witness—by, it may be, membership or financial support of a local Christian Service Council, or Housing Association, or C.O.P.E.C. branch—to our faith that Christian principles may and must be applied to every phase of

¹ Report of Archbishops' Commission (1918) on Industrial Problems (*Christianity and Industrial Problems*), p. 47.

life. Someone has said that there is really only one "problem": the problem of how to live together. We Christians believe that we have the key to it—the only key there is or can be. We must use it ourselves, and show others how to use it.

There has come to the Church in England recently an extraordinary opportunity of witnessing to this faith that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the only answer to the question, How is the human race to live together?—an opportunity such as no part of the Church has ever had before, and which will certainly not be repeated. It would be out of place here to speak at any length about the World Call to the Church. But it is most pertinent to the subject of this chapter to glance at the picture of the general world-situation with which the Call confronts us. It is the picture of human society in four areas—Africa, India, China and the Far East, and the Moslem World. Each of these areas is the scene of a colossal conflict, the conflict between everything that we mean by "Western civilisation"—science, philosophy, education, machinery, the industrial system, the motor-car, the cinema, the telephone, the wireless: these and a thousand other things—and a society which till comparatively recently knew none of them. In each case the spiritual result of this conflict is the same: it may be expressed most accurately by the word Disintegration. This is, indeed, not surprising. How can the superstitions of a primitive African tribe be expected to survive against Western knowledge? How can Moslem women continue to be content with the position given them by Islam, in the face of the Feminist Movement? How can Hindu polytheism maintain itself against the science of the West?

The result of the impact, then, is destructive, and increasingly so. And the end of the process is certain. The real strength of a nation or a people is only to be

measured by the degree to which its spiritual outlook is capable of meeting the demands and necessities of life. We have changed the lives of these peoples, and we have at the same time undermined their spiritual outlook : and over these immense fields of humanity there hangs the doom of inevitable disaster and destruction—and not alone for them—unless they can find some new spiritual dynamic equal to the demands of the new situation.

We Christians believe that we know where alone such a dynamic is to be found. What is more, the East knows too, or at least suspects. All over the vast areas to which the World Call refers, thoughtful men and women are seeking—for the most part unconsciously, but sometimes consciously—for the spirit which shall enable them, and us with them, “to live together.” They are seeking Christ : they are looking for the Spirit which, as all history testifies, comes from Him and from Him only.

And He is seeking them. He stands now at the door of the heart of Africa, and India, and China, and Japan, and knocks. He waits to open it. It is for His Church to open it—the Church, which is His Body ; for us, His hands and fingers.

I make no apology for recalling the reader, at the end of this chapter, to a point which has been mentioned more than once. We have been thinking here of the Church in action, and of the Christian’s share in building the Kingdom of God. Let us never forget that no enthusiasm for the Kingdom can be a substitute for devotion to its King. The inner life of prayer and communion with God must be the basis and mainspring of any service to His cause which is to be solid and enduring.

I am writing this in the week when the whole of Christendom is celebrating the seventh centenary of the death of St. Francis of Assisi. St. Francis, and the

movement which he initiated, changed the face of Europe. Perhaps he did as much as any man has ever done for the Kingdom of God. And yet, he did not talk about it: he probably did not even think much about it: certainly the "Kingdom" was not consciously one of the dominant ideas of his life. But the *King* was! St. Francis brought new life into the Church, and he did this by reviving, first in himself and then in his followers, the spirit of personal intimacy and fellowship with the Lord Jesus. So is it always. A man falls in love with our Lord, and "one loving spirit sets others on fire." And then the Kingdom comes, *not with observation*, but as surely and certainly as dawn passes into day.

IX

THE MIND IN RELIGION

WE English folk pride ourselves on being practical people. We have a healthy contempt for the high-brow. We are glad to know that our world-wide Empire has grown as the result of *action*, in some cases of unreflecting, unconsidered action. It is not, broadly speaking, congenial to us to concern ourselves with the principles or the motives on which our conduct is based. In other words, we do not greatly care for *thinking*. And when we are invited to think, to consider ideas and principles and reasons, we are apt to express our disinclination in some such words as, "All very fine in theory, *but . . .*," and to take refuge in the proverbial genius of our race for "muddling through."

And, further ; if there is one subject more than another in which we are inclined to put the importance of the intellect at a low estimate, it is religion. What matters here, we say, is not theory, but practice ; not dogma, but conduct : while theology is the only science in which the man in the street is quite sure that he is as competent as the expert—or so one would gather from the supreme confidence with which every penny-a-line journalist and novelist airs his views on the deepest problems of the Queen of Sciences.

Now, no doubt there is a germ of truth in this fairly general popular depreciation of the part which the mind ought to play in religion. But in this final chapter I shall try to present one or two out of a great mass of considerations, too often ignored, which may be urged on the other side.

What do we mean when we say that man has been “redeemed”? We mean, or ought to mean, that his whole personality has been “saved” from the hell of separation with God, and so from futility and perversion. But man’s personality includes his intellect as well as his “soul” and his “will”: and his intellect, as well as the rest of him, must be given back to God and dedicated to His service. This means, in brief, that we must take infinite pains to ensure that *our mind is pulling its full weight* in the whole complex activity which we call “religion”; and this, whether ours is an A1 or a C3 mind.

It would be idle to pretend that this duty is generally recognised, or that the average Christian is loving God with the whole of what the Hebrews called his “heart” and we call his “mind.” Nor is it difficult to illustrate the evil results of this general neglect. We will consider only one. Europe and America are inundated nowadays with “fancy religions” which thrive, it is not too much to say, on

playing ducks and drakes with the Bible. Is it conceivable that Christian Science, for example—whose authoritative text-book solemnly assures us that “Gihon” means “the rights of women,” and that when the Bible mentions the Holy Spirit it is referring to Christian Science!¹—could appeal to men and women with any *intelligent* appreciation of the Bible? “Russellism” is another case in point, and there are many more.

There are few more urgent needs at the present day in the sphere of religion than that people should be taught, and should be willing to learn, how to read the Bible with understanding. One would have thought that the mid-Victorian battle as to the “conflict” between science and the Bible was finished with, and that it would be taken for granted that the views of all educated people on this subject were shared by everyone else. Unfortunately, this is far from being the case. The Bible is not read, on the whole and by the mass of Christian people, “with understanding”: they are mostly content to treat it merely as a book of devotion, or as a storehouse of spiritual food which needs no digestion to ensure its effect.

But the prevailing ignorance of the Bible—the failure to appreciate that it is not “a Book” at all, but a great people’s literature, covering two thousand years of their history, written by many hands during more than a thousand years—is only one case in point. Ignorance is just as universal in regard to the elements of doctrine, or the history of Christianity, or the meaning and purpose of what we do in church. It has been truly said that if most of us knew as little about our jobs in ordinary life as we do about our Faith, we should be continuously out of work!

In theory, the importance of right thinking in

¹ See the Glossary to *Science and Health, with Key to the Scriptures*, by Mary Baker Eddy.

religion—of having the truest ideas about God and man and the relations between them which our mind, at each stage of its growth, is capable of receiving and assimilating—is beyond dispute. There is no duty of Christian discipleship which will not be done the better for our bringing our mind to bear on the doing of it. We have seen that discipleship means co-operation with God in the building up of His Kingdom in the hearts and lives of men and women. But can any part of such co-operation be carried out unintelligently and at the same time effectively? To ask such a question is to answer it. It is obvious that Bible-study is likely to be most profitable if it is intelligent; and that Prayer—as previous chapters of this book have tried to show—is most likely to be what God means it to be when made *with the understanding*.

Other instances suggest themselves. How can any one in these days presume to undertake the work of a Sunday-school teacher without some study of psychology, the science which is revolutionising all our ideas of education? What response are we likely to make to the World Call of the Church, unless we have some knowledge of the “world situation,” some sense—only to be obtained through such knowledge—of the whole human family seeking and groping (sometimes blindly, with no notion of its goal) for that which Christ alone can give? Or, lastly: we are all anxious nowadays to discover the bearings of Christian ethical principles—the principles of the Sermon on the Mount—on the problems created by industry and commerce, by racial antipathies, by international rivalries, and by a hundred other features of the modern world. We talk about these things. But it is only too true that many of us talk about them with next to no real understanding of either of the factors involved in the discussion: we know hardly more, for example, of what the whole of Our Lord’s moral teaching takes for granted as its foundation—namely,

the teaching of the Hebrew prophets—and divorced from which much of it is unintelligible, than we do of the elements of economics.

Never in the history of the world, perhaps, has there been a time when every variety of subject was more widely debated than now, when every convention and accepted tradition was subjected to a more merciless criticism, when the most sacred and intimate topics were more frankly discussed. There is much to be thankful for in this state of affairs. But it has its perils, and the chief of them is this, that few things are more dangerous than universal argument and debate on a foundation largely composed of ignorance. In clubs, in workshops, in railway-carriages, men and women are discussing the current "impression" that scientific study of the Bible has "knocked the bottom out of Christianity": how can the Christian give *a reason for the Hope that is in him* in the face of such discussions, without at least *some* knowledge of what are, and what are not, the broadly assured results of legitimate criticism? Men are talking about marriage, and divorce, and the control of conception: how can the Christian hold his own in such debate, without *some* intelligent appreciation of the fundamental principles underlying the Church's teaching and prohibitions on sexual questions?

Noblesse oblige. Surely it is "up to" the Christian to put as much mental effort into his religion as the Christian Scientist and the Spiritualist and the Theosophist are expected to put—and do put—into theirs?

One of the most impressive movements of recent years—a great stirring of men's minds by the Holy Spirit of God—is that of Adult Education. In classes organised by the Workers' Educational Association, in University Tutorial Classes, in University Extension Lectures, and in a hundred other ways, men and women of all kinds are doing real hard study and

thinking in history, science, economics, literature and philosophy. The work of Adult *Religious* Education cuts rather a pathetically insignificant figure beside all this.¹ There is a real possibility that in, let us say, another twenty-five years' time, England may be beginning to be an educated nation—in almost every subject except that without which, as Christians believe, all knowledge is vain and all education fraught with the possibilities of danger and misdirection.

Let me end this chapter, however, on another note. There is, of course, only one ultimate test of Christian discipleship: *If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.* Some men and women do not find this consecration of the mind, of which we have been thinking, easy: to many, indeed, it is hardly possible at all save through the most rigorous self-discipline, a real intellectual asceticism. Is it fanciful to suggest that such people should regard intellectual effort—the hardest thinking, on religious subjects, of which they are capable—as in a real sense a sharing in the Cross of Christ, undertaken out of devotion to Him and the conviction that it is an essential part of effective discipleship?

And, finally: the Englishman's distrust of intellectualism has this much of truth in it, that *mere* intellectualism—a religion solely of the mind—is not Christianity, but a perversion of it. True Christianity is a beautiful thing because it is a balanced and harmonious thing, compounded of thought and

¹ Contrast, for example, the figures for "secular" adult education given in the *Handbook and Directory of Adult Education* (1926) with the verdict of the *Copec Commission's Report on Education*: "The real and systematic educational work of the Churches among adults is practically negligible" (p. 156). (It should be noted that this verdict was pronounced prior to the recent and rapid extension of the valuable work of the Church Tutorial Classes Association.)

emotion and will and action. There is an urgent need among us to-day for more self-education—through corporate thinking as well as through private study and books—in the “doctrine” of Christ and His Church. But it is only if we are seeking to *do His will* so far as we apprehend it, that we shall learn, by the exercise of our minds, more of the doctrine.

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